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A COMPOSER'S IMAGINING OF
MUSICAL TRADITION AND THE
REINVENTION OF HERITAGE

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Abstract

As a Hong Kong-born concert-music composer operating in the historically Western-centric art form of concert music, with only Cantonese popular music qualified to be considered as my true musical tradition, I am awkwardly situated outside of two strong musical traditions, namely European art music and traditional Chinese traditional folk music. This thesis addresses the idea of the composers' perceived musical traditions and the impact this has on their work, particularly for those who come from a place where there is no conceivably strong musical heritage.

The inspiration for this work has been my own personal experience. The concept of musical tradition runs deep in my work and thinking, but before it became a source of inspiration to me, it was a cause of 'composer's block'. Dealing with this through research and talking to other composers has helped me to overcome this block, and at the same time, given me new insights, transforming the way I think about composing. Most of all, I hope the findings taken from this research will continue to shape my future works.

In Part 1, I will give a general overview of my own development as a composer and the genesis of my interest in the notion of musical traditions. Part 2 considers the meaning of 'tradition' in the context of this research. Part 3 will look at the processes and approaches some of the more relevant Western classical composers have taken in locating themselves in the increasing complex musical landscape of the twentieth/twenty-first century and their respective findings.

As an Asian composer myself, special attention will be paid in Part 4 to composers from Asia who found ways to deal with being 'outsiders'. Part 5 will consider how memory as an integral part of the construction of one's musical tradition. In Part 6, I will summarise all the ideas and approaches in dealing with the musical traditions discussed, and consider them selectively as the foundation for my own framework to contextualise (i.e. imagining) my musical traditions. Part 7 is an overview of my works, drawing findings from my research, i.e. the 're-invention' of my heritage. Through these works, I aim to provide an over-arching narrative and some possible solutions for composers faced with the issue of finding their compositional voices when they come from a less prominent musical culture.

1. My Music – a Retrospective

1.1. In the Beginning

*I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!*

*How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one's name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!*

Emily Dickinson, 1861

My earliest musical memories are of old Chinese popular song from the 1930s (also known as *shidai qu*), Cantonese opera, Western popular music such as songs by The Carpenters or The Bee Gees and most of all, Cantonese popular music of the 1970s. Although I was given pieces by Western Classical composers – Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Schubert, for example – to play when I was learning the piano at an early age, my active interest in Western Classical music did not develop until my teenage years.

Growing up in a British colony, one might suppose the influence of Western and Eastern musical culture on me to be in equal measure. In fact, the influence of Western musical culture outweighed its Eastern counterpart on many levels. For example, it was much easier for children in Hong Kong to take up Western instruments – notably piano, violin and guitar – than traditional Chinese instruments. It was a common perception among parents in Hong Kong that having their child play a Western instrument (or instruments) would indicate an upbringing of high quality, and hence a reflect the wealth and status of their family.

Similarly, a majority of the Cantonese popular songs I heard, which remained an important part of my musical life long after I left for England in 1990, were actually cover versions of British or American popular songs. As Ho Wai-Chung points out, Cantonese popular music is ‘not only a case of cultural imperialism and the Asianisation of Asian, but also involves a process of negotiated cultural identities,

as expressed in the language of Cantonese and other representational means' (Ho, 2003: 154). Many of the songs in Cantonese popular music, or Cantopop, from the 1980s were cover versions of hits from the United Kingdom and United States. Even with songs written by Chinese songwriters, with Cantonese lyrics and the use of traditional Chinese instruments in some arrangements, the influence of Western popular music was readily detectable in the melodic construction, harmonisation, use of cadences and the instrumental arrangements in Cantonese pop songs. The very concept of popular music, i.e. short catchy songs for the purpose of entertainment, is Western in essence, and radically different from the attributes, values and purposes of traditional Chinese music, as I will explore later on in this work (see Section 7.3).

To a naïve teenager who appreciated Cantonese popular music simply for its entertainment and sentimental value, the underlying complex cultural and political implications never seemed significant to me. Besides, musical education at my secondary school was very basic; I was not even aware of the concept of 'composing' until about the age of fifteen, when I tried to write down my own piano improvisations. These early attempts at composition, as I recall, were mostly in the style of Chinese popular songs that I knew and loved. This coincided with the beginning of my conscious interest in Western Classical music. At this time, I never completed any pieces due to a lack of direction and technical competence.

A decade had passed before I tried my hand at composing again – whilst I was studying electrical and electronic engineering, by this time in London. Although I managed to learn to notate music by reading musical scores, as far as harmonic, rhythmic, structural and the general aesthetic aspect of the music were concerned, I relied heavily on my instincts, as well as elements that I had distilled from the music that I found interesting. Paraphrasing Malcolm MacDonald's description of Schoenberg's development as a composer, this 'process of independent discovery' did however, help me to form my 'habits of mind', and to make my 'own judgment and mistrust of mere codified "rules" of composition' (MacDonald, 2008: 108).

Nevertheless, the criteria for choosing materials were never strict, nor did I question my relationship with the materials chosen. Similar to many composers, the necessity of constructing a mental model of a musical tradition – regardless of its authenticity – has been a crucial process in finding my identity, or 'voice-as-style' (Taylor-Jay, 2009: 88) as a composer. Without any restriction or stylistic obligation imposed on me by any teacher or institution, I had the freedom to pick up

compositional styles and techniques which I found fit for my creative purposes without sufficient critical consideration for their historical and cultural relevance to me as a composer. This lack of restraint and boundary was liberating for me at first, and I found it to be a useful creative strategy: it left a rich repository of musical vocabularies at my disposal. For each piece that I wrote, I was stimulated by ideas that excited me at the time, and my responses were expressed in musical terms, which I considered to be appropriate for individual work. However, the issue of musical tradition was never addressed consciously in these early works; they do not share an overriding ideological coherence among them as a body of work. My first stage work *The Original Chinese Conjuror* marks the end of this creative period.

1.2. Towards a Creative Crisis

With a running time of approximately 70 minutes, *The Original Chinese Conjuror* (2003-06) is one of my most substantial works to date. Subtitled *A Musical Diversion Suggested by the Lives of Chung Ling Soo*, it is based on the real life story of the American magician William Ellsworth Robinson (1861-1918), who became an entertainment sensation in Edwardian England under the stage persona of a Chinese magician – Chung Ling Soo.

The principal subject of the work is deception, and the impact that ‘being what you are not’ has on one’s life. Although this subject matter was chosen for its dramatic potentials, it was also a telling topic, perhaps subconsciously reflecting my inner conflict. The sheer quantity of music the work demanded meant that I had to exhaustively explore my creative reserves in order to produce over an hour’s worth of music, attempting to sustain the audience’s interest throughout. It was the perfect opportunity for self-reflective stocktaking.

The musical syntax of the work – with quotations, pastiches and parodies as its main currencies (with a bias towards the music of vaudeville, music hall and Broadway musicals) – was primarily chosen as a reflection of the fundamental subject of the work. Somehow, in the process of writing the work, this framework of borrowing and recycling styles began to leave me feeling my approach to composition was slowly coming to a dead end.

The primary problem was that I found it increasingly hard to write music that I felt was in any way representative of my history, due to my feeling of rootlessness

and the lack of a well-defined musical tradition which I could call my own. This created a sense of an 'identity vacuum'. In retrospect, the random directions that I took in works pre-dating *The Original Chinese Conjuror* can be seen as confused, disorganised and lacking in an overall sense of artistic and cultural coherence. None of these works addressed the fact that I come from Hong Kong, or its implications. I had a constant feeling of wearing someone else's costume, or ventriloquising, without a clear understanding of the rationale behind it.

This was becoming a big problem, which I felt I needed to address urgently. The desire to understand the nature of the stimuli for my compositions and to find coherence within my works became the motivation for this research project. As I investigated the matter further, I found the same problem has shaped the work of other composers. That understanding this was also an issue for others led me to appreciate the worth of an in-depth analysis.

2. Considering Traditions

2.1. Tradition and Identity

To understand the importance of musical tradition in a composer's work, one must first consider the role it plays in a composer's search for identity.

Traditions are 'commonly understood as sets of beliefs and practices that are transmitted across generations to form a context that then becomes a framework for subsequent cultural activity and interpretation' (Beard and Gloag, 2005: 185). For many composers in the past, tradition has been a source of inspiration and an impetus for their creativity, by way of reflection, rejection and borrowing. In his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, originally published in 1919, T.S. Eliot suggested that tradition

involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence ... the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.

(Eliot, 1975: 38)

For Eliot, then, tradition involves an awareness of the past, a sense of historical precedent, which becomes an active force in the present and the future. In other words, to have a keen sense of awareness of one's own musical tradition is an essential element in identifying one's musical identity. The Swedish songwriter and singer Göran Folkestad once remarked on the important role music plays in forming the identities of individuals and of groups of people:

It [music] provides a means of defining oneself as an individual belonging to and allied with a certain group, and of defining others as belonging to other groups which are separate from one's own. The development of a musical identity is not only a matter of age, gender, musical taste and other preferences, but is also a result of cultural, ethnic, religious and national contexts in which people live. Individuals forming their musical identities are part of, influenced by and a product of several such collective musical identities, and these exist in parallel and on several levels – including the local, the regional, the national and the global.

(Folkestad, 2002: 151)

With the exception of age and gender, all the attributes listed here are external, non-corporeal factors. The musicologist Richard Middleton remarked that music can never belong to a composer; it is 'always already "other," always located elsewhere (than here), in the matrix of dialogically constructed codes and historical debris responsible for its specific forms'. Music's interiority (in the sense of the bodily processes of sound production) 'has been turned into a myth of origination and possession' (Middleton, 2000: 59). This concept of music as something outside us, something external, is particularly relevant here. Once we accept the idea that no composer can 'own' the music that they hear, they can start considering themselves in the combined role of receiver, processor and transmitter of music. The result is an overall impression of the way we see the world, expressing our opinions in sound according to our unique relationships with these external stimuli. It is within the network of these connections that a composer's identity is to be constructed.

Middleton's use of the term 'matrix' implies a network of reception – a paradigm of negotiation – the acceptance and rejection of musical protocols historically relevant to the individual. Musical traditions, therefore, are not as straightforward as a set of musical artefacts – scales, modes, orally transmitted folk melodies, or anything tangible. They can be something more volatile, with various degrees of geographical, social or political associations. It can be a framework of

opinions, attitudes and thoughts, a scheme of filtering out ideas not useful for the purposes of a composer. Musical tradition is a thing of the mind.

One of the crucial facts of Eliot's comment that we cannot ignore is his exclusive reference to the European tradition. By implication, this exclusion of non-European traditions, and through the proposition of the 'whole', indicates that this tradition is now available only as a totality and as an absolute point of reference, i.e. the mainstream of poetic experience in his argument. His positioning of Homer as the starting point further highlights this slanted perspective. Such opinion creates a dilemma for artists such as myself who readily identify with traditions outside the mainstream – or 'peripheral' (Hess, 2001: 6), but whose compositional vocabulary or style is yet based heavily on or derived from 'mainstream' music. These ties with the mainstream naturally lead us to consider and contextualise the other traditions using attributes and values developed for and by the mainstream, for the purpose of cross-reference, comparison and understanding. But more problematically, these generalisations lead to misunderstanding and devaluation of the perceived aesthetic values of the other traditions. Therefore, the sensitivity towards the meanings of the term 'tradition', and the implication of 'belonging' for artists like myself is inevitably heightened, and in the meantime, the process of finding our identity is more complicated.

2.2. Where Do Composers Belong?

Composers associate themselves with a tradition by establishing a sense of belonging. Curiously, the feeling of not belonging, or displacement, has been felt and articulated, often with a sense of uneasiness, by many twentieth-/twenty-first-century composers, particularly those who are not of Western European origin. Béla Bartók (1881-1945) is one such example; the anxiety he felt was

deepened by the double bind of being Hungarian and aspiring to success abroad. While for Arnold Schoenberg identifying his German precursors as models supposedly guaranteed that the path he had taken was justified by music history itself, for Bartók invoking his Hungarian musical heritage would only have served to provincialize him as an exotic "other". For Schoenberg choosing his models from German music history was an act of pride. For Bartók, who had to position himself not only as an innovator but also as an artist securely rooted both in national and Western European traditions, it was an agonizing, difficult process.

(Móricz, 1999: 399)

In creating music that was Hungarian in character, and yet new in tone, Bartók could only make use of the musical heritage which was available to him at the time. But all that was Hungarian in his heritage consisted of ‘nineteenth-century romantic music, the pseudo-folk songs and *verbunkos* music’, while the modern means of expression consisted of ‘the music of [Richard] Strauss and the development of nineteenth-century German music’. Therefore, Bartók could not, by any means, avoid the crisis resulting from the ‘contradictory and incongruous nature of two elements’ (Ujfalussy, 1971: 57-58).

Bartók’s integration of folk music into art music was essential in his composing career as it ‘could be considered both modernist innovation and national loyalty’ (Móricz, 1999: 399). Such a creative decision can be viewed as an act of patriotic duty as much as a necessary step for his career as a composer. Some of the Hungarian critics – including Aladár Tóth (1898–1968) and Antal Molnár (1890-1983) – saw Bartók’s reliance on Hungarian peasant music, folk traditions, and his borrowing from the latest trends in European music, as ‘integral to his Hungarian identity ... an opportunity for Hungarian music to embody an ideal synthesis of East and West, old and new’ (Schneider, 2006: 121).

But with such clean-cut divisions between vernacular folk music and more sophisticated art music, we run the risk of simplifying the issue of identifying the degree of influence of different musical traditions on an individual, or even simplifying the notion of the composer’s own perception of belonging. By classifying the music of Hungary as nationalist, as ‘an alternative to “universality”, the prerogative of the “central” musical nations [Germany, France, and Italy]’, we automatically relegate Hungary to ‘peripheral’ status. (Dahlhaus, 1980: 89). It is with such a perspective that composers from ‘peripheral’ countries including Russia, Spain, Norway and even England (Hess, 2001: 6; Locke, 2009: 244-245) are often propelled to strive for universalism as a mean of ‘transcending the periphery’ (Hess, 2001: 6). Of course, the scope of ‘universalism’ referred to here still resonates strongly with Eliot’s comment, where Western European musical tradition is considered to be the ‘mainstream’. In Section 4.2, we will consider universalism in a wider context, which will be more appropriate for the consideration of the musical traditions I respond to.

Another composer whose work is strongly coloured by his attitude towards

tradition and belonging is Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). Russianness is at the core of the success of his early works, notably in his three consecutive scores for the Ballets Russes – *L’oiseau de feu* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911), *La sacre du printemps* (1913) – and works that immediately followed, including *Les Noces* (1913-23), *Renard* (1915-16) and *Histoire du soldat* (1918) (Walsh, 1999; Toorn and McGinnes, 2012). But by the end of the 1910s, Stravinsky felt the need to move away from the influence of his home country, and started drawing inspiration from the more mainstream Western European music, specifically music from the Baroque and Classical periods as a way of progressing creatively. His view of his Russian roots was becoming notably cool and detached. In 1928, he remarked to a Swiss interviewer that ‘I don’t consider myself particularly Russian. I am a cosmopolitan’ (Walsh, 1999: 517). Similarly, in his Charles Eliot Norton Lectures (1939-40), he gave a unique view on Russianness:

Soviet Russian music ... I must confess that I know it only from a distance. But did not Gogol say that from a distant land (in this case, Italy, his adopted country) “it was easier for him to embrace Russia in all its vastness”? I too believe I have some right to judge it from a west European or American vantage point. All the more so because Russia, at the present moment, is wrestling with processes so contradictory that it is admittedly almost impossible to see clearly from a vantage point, and consequently all the more impossible from the interior of the country itself.

(Stravinsky, 1982: 98)

But as Stephen Walsh suggests, Stravinsky’s comment has to be read in the context of his current works, and in the context of what was still vulgarly understood as ‘Russian’ (Walsh, 1999: 517). Such an adjustment or repositioning of cultural belonging was a crucial element to Stravinsky’s unlocking of creative resources, which could otherwise be unavailable, or considered ‘illegitimate’ for him. After the completion of *The Rake’s Progress* (1947-51), Stravinsky sensed the novelty and persuasive power of his neo-classical works were wearing off. With the opera’s ‘obsessive stylistic self-consciousness’, as Richard Taruskin points out, at the time of its first performance in Venice:

... it seemed the product of a composer blissfully out of touch with the contemporary requirements of his arts. For the first time in his life, Stravinsky found himself rejected by the younger generation of European musicians. The effect of this rejection on his self-esteem was traumatic.

(Taruskin, 2010: 117)

With the increasing prominence of music by Darmstadt avant-grade composers, Stravinsky felt the urgency to catch up in order to keep his place as a leading figure in Western art music: a strategic stylistic manoeuvre was necessary. With the death of Arnold Schoenberg – a composer who has been generally considered to stand at the opposite end of the ‘musical divide’ from Stravinsky (Toorn and McGinnes, 2012: 1) – in 1951, Stravinsky no longer felt restricted from venturing into the arena of serialism, championed by Schoenberg and his disciples, more openly. Through the help of Robert Craft (b.1923), Stravinsky ‘gained access to new modes of musical thinking and writing he had previously ignored, and even scorned’ (Taruskin, 2010: 118). His ‘unexpected conversion’ to twelve-tone system in his later works, as composer George Perle (1915-2009) suggested, allowed him to ‘create a great deal of excitement in the music circles’ (Perle, 1993: 148). Superficially, this change of direction did appear to supply Stravinsky ‘means of achieving social or artistic acceptance in avant-garde circles’ (Straus, 2003: 152); in fact, in line with Stravinsky’s life-long working ethos:

The creator’s function is to sift the elements he receives from her, for human activity must impose limits upon itself. The more art is controlled, limited, worked over, the more it is free ... If everything is permissible to me, the best and the worst; if nothing offers me any resistance, then any effort is inconceivable, and I cannot use anything as a basis, and consequently every undertaking becomes futile.

(Stravinsky, 1982: 63)

Serialism provided the perfect impetus, much needed by Stravinsky during the creative low point following the completion of *The Rake’s Progress*. The way he developed his very personal interpretation of serialism (Straus, 2003: 155-172) is a perfect example of the ‘re-invention’ of a framework – or heritage – for oneself by finding the appropriate way of absorbing, assimilating and reconstituting rules from other traditions. Stravinsky has described his approach to musical composition as a ‘game’ (Straus, 2003: 152). This analogy provides a useful insight into the way Stravinsky perceived his tradition, as both game and tradition are fundamentally the products of observation and execution of a pre-determined set of rules, instructions and restrictions. By considering composition as a game, Stravinsky implied the possibilities of altering his own tradition (as well as constructing new ones), well demonstrated in his shift from neo-classism to serialism. It seems then, that

Stravinsky considered these various traditions as ‘games’ to be adopted and discarded, each with its own personal set of rules open to constant ‘re-interpretation’.

Both Bartók and Stravinsky came from cultures outside the mainstream, and the anxiety of not fitting into it must have been felt by them constantly. In order to ‘transcend the periphery’, to become a part of the mainstream, it would have been necessary for them to regularly negotiate between their own ‘natural’ national musical heritages and the Western European mainstream musical framework. By identifying the similarities, differences and expressive possibilities, both composers re-defined the boundaries of a tradition that they would like to be a part of.

A desire for change implies dissatisfaction with the present situation. When composers such as Bartók and Stravinsky re-configured their heritages, one of the motivating factors was undeniably anxiety: the anxiety of not fitting in, or not belonging to a bigger narrative of music history. This sense of rootlessness is an important factor in the way composers identify the boundaries of their musical traditions and redefine them. However, this anxiety is not solely relevant to composers coming from ‘peripheral’ countries.

2.3. The Notion of Rootlessness

For a composer who came from a ‘mainstream’ tradition, like the Austrian Ernst Krenek (1900-91), the anxiety of not belonging was equally relevant, as demonstrated by an incident near the end of his life:

On a mild and sunny January day in 1983 he stood in front of his Palm Springs home with friends who were congratulating him on having two such agreeable places as Mödling and Palm Springs in which to live. He made no answer at first. Then his eyes filled with tears and he said sadly, “I don’t know where I belong.”

(Stewart, 1991: 373)

Krenek concerned himself with the issue of tradition to a great extent, as some of his interviews and tradition-related writings have demonstrated (Krenek, 1962; Krenek, 1964; Krenek, 1972). However, Krenek’s impetus in tackling musical tradition was different from Bartók’s and Stravinsky’s. As George Perle pointed out:

Krenek insisted on the autonomy of the language of music, he always found an ideological rationale for the significant changes in his style. The overriding social and political

circumstance of the time was the growing power of the Nazi and the threat to Austria of the party's pan-Germanic ambitions, and it was a source of satisfaction to him that in aligning himself with Schoenberg he had 'adopted the musical technique that the tyrants hated most of all.'

(Perle, 1993: 152)

Following his early success in works such as the jazz-inspired opera *Jonny spielt auf* (1926), Krenek went from being 'the darling of a brash materialistic society to become a political refugee; he unexpectedly committed to twelve-tone compositions' (Taruskin, 2010: 38) as an expression of conveying 'the loneliness and alienation of humanity' (Henze, 1982: 36). Rather than employing a strategy of accepting and rejecting one's musical tradition based on a critical understanding of the impact and inevitability of one's own history – for the sake of 'transcending the periphery' or otherwise – Krenek's way of re-negotiating compositional style based on 'ideological rationale' seems arbitrary. Throughout his long creative life, Krenek made many such changes of creative direction, and his output encompasses all possible syntaxes employed in Western classical music. As a result, Krenek became a difficult case for musicologists to place in music history, as he involuntarily failed to create any sustained link with any cultural industries. From whatever 'tradition' he is viewed from, he will always be considered an outsider, a displaced person who does not belong anywhere, a sentiment evident in his own epiphany.

Could this cumulative sense of not-belonging, or rootlessness, be for a creative artist a result of making significant stylistic changes solely based on ideological rationales triggered primarily by external events? Or could it be the result of an internal soul-searching inspired by personal experiences, combined with a certain amount of critical analysis of one's musical heritages? Curiously, the French-Canadian composer Denys Bouliane (b.1955), who has never felt attached to any school, nor perceived himself to be the recipient of a specific tradition, used this sense of rootlessness as a creative impetus, as he once remarked 'I am a musician without culture, without tradition somehow'¹ (Wilson, 1988: 32).

By holding such an unusual viewpoint, regarding one's cultural background, how would a composer in a similar position as Bouliane go about finding their 'roots'?

¹ 'Je suis un musicien sans culture, sans tradition en quelque sorte.' Translation by Patrick Levesque.

(if there were any), and more importantly, a compositional voice? Before we go further in finding out possible answers to these questions, let us take a look at the definitions of musical tradition from a composer's point of view.

2.4. Tradition as a System of Values

In his article *Tradition in Perspective*, published in 1962, Krenek suggests the concept of tradition is as

dialectical and ambivalent as any concept that demands, and allows of, interpretation, for such interpretation may start at different and possibly opposite points of departure. These in turn depend on the system of values chosen by the respective observers so that the term "tradition" will take on positive or negative shadings ...

(Krenek, 1962: 27)

Krenek's concern with tradition is of particular interest here because of the subjective nature of interpretation; it is a useful metaphor for composers to put their works into perspective. Rather than considering tradition as a collectively perceived cultural label, tradition is described as 'the continuity of ideas expressed through the repetition of procedures':

Whether a composer prefers to apply his creative efforts to the continuation of an existing style, or feels the urge to do away with tradition and to open up new avenues, is not only a matter of his individual temperament, but also of the general historical situation. There are periods in which the ideal held up to the creative artist is perfection within a generally recognized stylistic field, conformity to accepted standards. There are other periods when what is expected of the composer above all is originality, or nonconformity.

(Krenek, 1962: 28)

What Krenek highlights here is a composer's shift in his/her relationship to different traditions, a shift motivated by a combination of individual disposition and external circumstances. Although such a statement brings us one step closer to understanding the influence of traditions on composers' work, at the same time, it opens up another question. As the twentieth century progressed, the definition of musical tradition became increasingly complex. With the advance of technology in communication and transportation, mass migration caused by the two World Wars as well as other man-made disasters accelerating the flow of knowledge between

different parts of the world, cultural exchange became a common occurrence.

To what degree is a composer influenced by each of the different ‘systems of values’ that he/she encountered in such an increasingly complex matrix of cultural cross-current? Krenek’s model is certainly applicable to composers living in certain countries where there are ‘principal’ traditions – e.g., Austro-German in Krenek’s case – supplemented by several other less prominent ones. But for composers whose principal locations are of a weaker calibre both historically and politically speaking, without the infrastructure of a well-established cultural industry, one suspects Krenek’s analogy might run the risk of being too simplistic for the understanding of a composer’s position in terms of traditions. Elements such as the evolution over time of a tradition (and hence of ‘values’) due to political, social and even educational changes have not been taken into account.

3. Navigating Through the Labyrinth of Musical Traditions

3.1. Constructing an Imaginary Country

Both being Hungarian, Bartók and György Ligeti (1923-2006) share much of the same cultural heritage. But by living through the Second World War and the Cold War, the creative decisions faced by Ligeti were significantly different, and drastically more complex. In works such as *Apparitions* (1958-59), *Atmosphères* (1961) and *Requiem* (1965), Ligeti explored the sonic possibilities of multiple layers of microcosmic contrapuntal activity, a technique later became known as micropolyphony (Steinitz, 2003: 103-106). This earned him a place among the forefront of avant-garde composers in the 1960s and early 1970s (Griffiths, 1997: 21-24; Steinitz, 2003: 96-113). But by the time Ligeti had decided to write an ‘anti-anti-opera’ after seeing Mauricio Kagel’s anti-operatic work *Staatstheater* (1967/70) in 1971 (Steinitz, 2003: 220), he already felt a looming creative crisis, both for him and for composers of the post-war generation. As he reminisced in an interview in 1981:

I find myself, so to speak, in a kind of compositional crisis, which, gradually and to some extent furtively, was already opening up during the seventies. And this isn’t just a personal crisis but much more, I believe, a crisis of the whole generation to which I belong ... not to go on composing in an old avant-garde manner that had become a cliché, but also not to decline into a return to earlier styles. I’ve been trying deliberately in these last years to find an answer for

myself – a music that doesn't mean regurgitating the past, including the avant-garde past.

(Griffiths, 1997: 102)

Ligeti did not find his way out of this stylistic crisis until he came to write his *Horn Trio* of 1981. Nonetheless, in his magnum opus *Le Grand Macabre* (1974-77, rev. 1986), he had already started a lengthy investigation and self-examination. It is a work full of sonic inventions as well as pseudo-pastiches and allusions to older musics – most famously in its final passacaglia parodying Beethoven's passacaglia theme in the finale of the *Eroica* symphony (Steinitz, 2003: 232-233). Although the main purpose of *Le Grand Macabre* is its response to the operatic genre (Griffiths, 1997: 101), its quality of 'examining the past' – specifically Ligeti's peripherally European (i.e. Hungarian) past – places it as 'the most apt musical symbol for the new space that Hungary came to take in Ligeti's work' (Beckles Willson, 2007: 163). Referring to an article titled *Musical Memories of My Childhood* written by Ligeti in honour of the publisher Ludwig Strecker, Rachel Beckles Willson pointed out that one crucial factor of Ligeti's success in creating a strange and intriguing past in the eyes of the others was the 'inaccessibility of his origins' (Beckles Willson, 2007: 164). Without the constraint of facts – due to a lack of surviving documentation – Ligeti had the freedom to inject elements of fantasy into the construction of his past and the 'musical history' of a country known as Hungary according to his 'memories'. Ligeti's Hungary 'was essentially something that he elaborated for the purposes of his career in the West, a considerable part of it was tinged with fantasy' (Beckles Willson, 2007: 164). It is interesting to know that the idea of 'imaginary country' occupied such an important role in Ligeti's mind that he originally planned the title of the stage work to be *Kylwiria*, an imaginary country he had invented in childhood (Steinitz, 2003: 219). Although he eventually settled on the name Breughelland in the finished *Le Grand Macabre*, the notion of an imaginary country remained strong.

Ligeti's Hungary was a very different country from the one referred to by Bartók and Kodály (both of them, incidentally had worked as ethnomusicologists):

Indeed although initially Ligeti was careful to distinguish his own use of folk music from the methods of Bartók, stating clearly when discussing *Le Grand Macabre* in 1981 that '[m]y folklore ingredients are impossible, imaginary, unrelated to any nation', as years passed and his works evolved he became committed to attributing their debt to a unique past of his own.

(Beckles Willson, 2007: 165)

In constructing an imaginary country where imagined ‘traditions’ can be drawn, Ligeti realised the importance of an artificial semiotics based on ‘reality’ to increase the credibility and coherence of such make-believe location:

His personal history could move more distinctly into the realm of legend when he identified his wish to ‘return to my origins, to Hungarian literature’, for as he referred more often to the quality of Hungarian literature and language, he moved closer to Hungarian nationalist mythology. In 1984 he desired to write music that was organised like language, music with an emotional semantic as if it were a sort of language, and subsequently he focused on the importance of the Hungarian mother tongue specifically, profiting from a long tradition of Hungarian discourse to state that ‘if Liszt had spoken Hungarian, he would have written music that was different’.

(Beckles Willson, 2007: 166)

This particular strategy of drawing imagined traditions from a make-believe place based on familiar attributes from our day-to-day ‘real life’, where the ‘real’ melts into the ‘imaginary’ (and vice versa) resonates with the literary movement known as magical realism. This genre is associated with a select group of Latin-American writers including Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges, who ‘experienced themselves as lacking (in their case as a result of poverty and economic exile) a cultural tradition in which to ground their creativity’ (Levesque, 2008: 303). It is with the term ‘magical realism’ (or ‘réalisme magique’) that the Canadian composer Denys Bouliane, a student of Ligeti, identified himself earlier on in his career (Wilson, 1988; Conen, 1991; Levesque, 2008). For his on-going cycle of works under the collective title *Gamache – Rythmes et échos des rivages anticostiens* (2009-09), *Vols et vertiges du Gamache* (2008-10), *Tekeni-Ahsen* (2010-2011) and *Kahseta’s tekeni-ahsen* (2010-2011) – Bouliane draws inspiration from an invented community living on the Anticosti Island in Quebec, which has its own history, culture, language, custom and music. This technique was one of the many solutions Bouliane came up with as ‘a need to situate oneself, to forcefully or clumsily verify the state of the presence of one’s roots’² (Bouliane, 1998: 32).

Born in Quebec, Denys Bouliane was a rock guitarist between the age of 13 and 19. He enrolled at the Laval University to study with Jacques Hétu, and later with

² ‘... être ce besoin de se situer, avec, force ou maladresse, de vérifier l’état ou la présence de racines’. Translation by Patrick Levesque.

Alain Gagnon. As the composer recalled, when he was a student in the 1970s, the Montreal music scene was saturated with the music of post-serialism (represented by composer such as Serge Garant (1929-1986)) and the post-Messiaen school (with Gilles Tremblay (b.1932) as a leading figure). Bouliane did not feel he belonged to either school of composers, and had been looking elsewhere for role models. When he first heard *Le Grand Macabre*, he was completely transfixed; it was ‘the simple grammatical tool’ in Ligeti’s music, ‘manipulated in very personal ways’, that fascinated the young Bouliane, who eventually decided to study with the Hungarian composer in Hamburg (Yiu, 2011).

It is not hard for one to imagine the attraction *Le Grand Macabre* had for a young composer such as Bouliane, who did not feel a sense of belonging to the avant-garde school, or in fact, to any school. The idea of ‘imagined tradition’ that Ligeti had started exploring in his ‘anti-anti-opera’ struck a chord in Bouliane, who had already concerned himself with the issue of tradition. For the young Canadian composer:

... it is first and foremost a matter of lacking a tradition of concert or “creative” art music that is collectively recognized, appreciated and encouraged as one’s own and through which one can visualize oneself and one’s history ... contemporary Canadian and Québécois composers have no body of works, musical models, or collectively celebrated musical figures through which to explore their own artistic individuality or from which to draw inspiration.

(Levesque, 2008: 302)

Bouliane, who was inspired by the notion of imagined countries and traditions explored in *Le Grand Macabre* and his subsequent study with Ligeti, and who perceived himself to have no musical culture in which to find his roots, came to the conclusion that ‘all that I can do is to play with tradition, to become an illusionist, to make believe I do have a culture, to invent a pseudo-tradition, in sum to play the part of the chameleon’³ (Wilson, 1988: 32).

For the purpose of ‘playing with tradition’, Bouliane developed a system of ‘extended modes’ based on diatonic modes (Wilson, 1988; Baril, 2006; Levesque, 2008). This invented system of organising musical attributes enabled him to build harmonies with various degree of diatonic implications, often alluding to existing

³ ‘Tout ce qu’il me reste à faire, c’est de jouer avec la tradition, de devenir un illusionniste, de me donner l’impression de posséder une culture, d’inventer une pseudo-tradition, de jouer au caméléon pour tout dire’. Translation by Patrick Levesque.

musical syntaxes – such as diatonic chords – with unexpected resolutions, or as he described as ‘pseudo-functional tonality’ (Wilson, 1988: 26). More importantly, all these harmonic materials have traceable links to a pre-defined, artificial modal-framework. In doing so, the notion of a ‘tradition’ is embedded in a system with a logical paradigm that governs the basic palette of the music, just as major and minor scales have been functioning in Western music in the last few centuries.

3.2. The Giant Web Metaphor of Culture

Bouliane studied with Ligeti between 1980 and 1985. One of the ideas Ligeti suggested during one of his many Hamburg composition classes left a lasting impact on Bouliane. It was the ‘oscillatory theory of culture’:

What comes to mind are the discussions we had in Ligeti's studio in Hamburg at the beginning of the nineteen eighties where the metaphor of the "giant web" fascinated us. Imagine for a moment the following representation of the history of living beings: an infinite multi-dimensional spider web woven across space and time. All living creatures have a place in it and each one "is shaken, shakes, and will shake" in its own way. Some are very active; they create waves, "ripples" in the web. These ripples carry in all directions in space and time and on occasion pass through relays (in the electrical sense), multipliers that vibrate at the same frequency and that amplify, modulate, or simply react to the signal, themselves creating new waves ...

(Bouliane, 2008)

Compared to Krenek’s’ vision of tradition as a ‘system of value’, this metaphor is more useful in visualising the complex issue of multiple influences in the global age, by taking into account approaches to tradition with a high degree of make-believe, as in the cases of Ligeti and Bouliane. By imagining each individual occupying the centre point of his/her own version of the multi-dimensional ‘giant web’, every source of influence on that person is placed in ‘relative position’ to that person according to chronological, geographical, social and other factors, and each source has its own magnitude of oscillation. The bigger the influence is, the larger the wave it creates. The person will pick up each of these influences according to his/her relative distance from these sources as well as the power of the wave each source creates. With this model, we can put ourselves into a more comprehensive, ‘multi-dimensional’ perspective regarding traditions compared to Krenek’s relatively simple

metaphor.

The default position of a composer in the ‘giant web’ is determined by his/her background, education and other pre-determined factors. However, he/she is free to choose his/her position in relationship to all the sources of influence (or ‘traditions’) according to the individual’s artistic conviction. This adjustment of position in order to engineer the overall received magnitude of influences is the exact metaphor for the ‘imagining’ of one’s tradition. Similarly, each composer has the potential to invent a tradition if his/her creation has the quality and gravitas to influence others. One thing is certain – no one exists in an absolute cultural vacuum. This ‘giant web’ will be used as the fundamental model of considering traditions in the rest of this research.

4. Traditions in the Global Age

4.1. The Asian Dilemma

Up to the end of the nineteenth century, Western musical traditions were easier to identify. For composers of art music working in the twentieth century, their relationships with musical traditions were more complex. In addition to an understanding and incorporation of canonical sources, composers were faced with the prospect of influences of music they were acquainted with when growing up – popular music, world music and other musical idioms – which were not necessarily transmitted across generations, but through mass media. Geographical attributes were becoming less and less relevant to traditions, as Homi K. Bhabha points out that

the very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or ‘organic’ ethnic communities – as the grounds of cultural comparativism – are in the profound process of redefinition.

(Bhabha, 2004: 5)

Globalisation, including all types of migration, travel, instant communication and access to information and images, has had a major impact on music and its dissemination. Since the 1950s, billions of people have become exposed to cultures previously unfamiliar to them. Music of the industrialised West has exerted a vast and varied impact on most of the world’s musical cultures. Bruno Nettl summarises:

In the course of the twentieth century, it is reasonable to argue that cultural mix has been a major prevailing force in musical innovation. Most of the forms of popular music that became prevalent first in the Americas and Europe, and then in the rest of the world, each represent elements from two or more of the world's culture areas. In most if not all cases, we are faced with the confluence of Western elements and those of a non-Western society, and one could make a case for the suggestion that the most significant event in world music of the 20th century is the coming of Western musical culture to all other cultures. ... The twentieth century has been different in several ways: one music was brought to all others, and thus the world becomes a laboratory in which we can see how different cultures and musical systems respond to what is essentially the same stimulus.

(Nettl, 1986: 360)

Although Nettl sympathetically highlights the bi-directional nature of inter-cultural influence between Western and non-Western societies, he does not deny the centrality of Western music in the global musical landscape. In some ways, he thus echoes T.S. Eliot's view on tradition (as well as Ho Wai-Chung's suggestion of cultural imperialism in Section 1.1). The Chinese composer Chou Wen-chung (b.1923) highlights the issue from the point of view of a 'minority':

It is often observed that Chinese music, in particular, does not have a solid theoretical base; a view that has also caused modern Chinese composers and educators to ignore Chinese theoretical writings. In reality, though such an observation only illustrates a universal attitude of judging other cultures exclusively according to the conventions of one's own.

(Chou, 2007: 503)

Of course, no assumption can be made of the background of Chinese composers as it 'much depends on when they were born, where they spent their childhood or formative years, where they were educated and where they now live' (Chou, 2007: 501). But one of the more general issues highlighted by Chou was the ignorance of Chinese theory by the natives themselves. This problem is echoed by Tōru Takemitsu (1930-96):

I am Japanese, but when I decided to be a composer, I did not know anything about my own musical tradition. I hated everything about Japan at that time because of my experience during the war. I really wanted to be a composer who was writing Western music, but after I had studied Western music for ten years I discovered by chance my own Japanese traditions. At that time I was crazy about the 'Viennese School' composers, and by chance I heard the music of the Bunraku Puppet Theater ... I suddenly recognized that I was Japanese and I should study my own tradition. So I started learning to play the Biwa. I studied it with a great master for two

years and became very serious about our tradition. But I still try to combine it with Western music in my compositions.

(Takemitsu, 1993)

This problem can be attributed to a fundamental issue within music education in Asia. There is a phenomenon of indigenisation of Western culture in Asian countries where ‘Western art music has been legitimized through governmental and/or institutional practice, radically redefining the social function of art music and concept of musical authorship in the process’ (Everett, 2004: 5).

The evolution of music in China in the twentieth century attests to ‘the important role Western music assumed in the standardization and homogenization of the traditional musical repertoire’ (Everett, 2004: 6). Christian missionaries introduced Western music into China in the seventeenth century, centred around the European émigré population in Shanghai, and this continued right up to the twentieth century. The intellectual and political development associated with the May Fourth Movement (1915-1921), which ‘attacked the old classical education’ and sustained an ‘objection to the association of music with official and ethical parameters’ (Perris, 1983:13) became the main catalyst for the establishment of a national music based on Western practice (Everett, 2004: 6; Jones, 2001: 35-36).

During his study at New England Conservatory (1946-1950), Chou Wen-chung absorbed a huge amount in terms of compositional techniques and acquiring familiarity with major contemporary works. But the incompatibility of his choice of thematic materials with the technique he employed, his ‘blending of Chinese melody and Western harmony’ was finally put into question by his teacher Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959). This problem was further highlighted when Nicolas Slonimsky (1894-1995) challenged Chou’s knowledge about traditional Chinese music, which made ‘Chou [feel] embarrassed because actually he knew very little’ (Chang, 2001: 100). Motivated by a keen sense of embarrassment and heritage-awareness, instead of spending time in collecting Chinese folk melodies, Chou devoted himself between 1955 and 1957 to the study of the literature, notation, historical background, and playing technique of traditional Chinese *qin* (seven-string zither) music. At the same time, he also began to formulate how he was going to use this resource to develop his own style. Combining his study of Chinese painting, calligraphy, poetry and philosophy with his study of Western music history, while working with Paul Henry

Lang (1901-91) and Erich Hertzmann (1902-63) at Columbia University, Chou developed a comparative perspective in his conceptualisation of the ‘difference between some of the general aesthetic values of Western and Chinese arts and music’ (Chang, 2001: 101):

Western	Chinese
<i>Straight tones preferred</i>	<i>Bent or embellished tones preferred</i>
<i>Aural impressions emphasized</i>	<i>Process of creation, not end result</i>
<i>Clarity of meaning</i>	<i>Suggestive, unexplained is desirable</i>
<i>Man controls nature</i>	<i>Nature dictates</i>

Table 1 Chou Wen-chung’s concept of differences between Western and Chinese music and arts.

This newly established concept, combined with ‘a desire to succeed as a composer in the West’ (Chang, 2001: 101) provided a foundation for Chou to filter through the classical Chinese materials, and to fuse them with the new compositional concepts that he had just learnt.

A similar journey was experienced by the Filipino composer, pianist and ethnomusicologist José Maceda (1917-2004). Starting his musical career as a concert pianist, Maceda later turned to historical musicology (incidentally, also with Paul Henry Lang at Columbia University), ethnomusicology and eventually composition. In 1947, during the preparation for a series of recitals featuring Beethoven’s *Appassionata* sonata in Manila, he was ‘repeatedly provoked by an interior voice posing what was for him an epiphany and a previously unasked question, “What has all of this got to do with coconuts and rice?”’ (Tenzer, 2003: 94). As Maceda later recalled, there was a notable absence of indigenous, pre-colonial music (implicitly symbolised by ‘coconuts and rice’) in the culture with which he grew up, under American occupation and in a middle class community of professionals, clerics and civil servants. The European tonality, as Michael Tenzer pointed out, was rooted deeply enough in Manila artistic circles, which ‘inculcated inspiring musicians with a sense of the inexorable authority of European tonality, and fed the tenacious illusion that there was nothing else musically Philippine [sic] to discover’ (Tenzer, 2003: 95).

Maceda’s awakening came with two very different musical encounters: first, in the late 1940s, being introduced to the music of Varèse, and later the music of

Xenakis; and second, upon his return to the Philippines in 1952, encountering the sound of the kinaban (Hanunoo jaw's harp of Mindoro island). The latter event led him to ethnomusicological research in the Philippines and Southeast Asia (Tenzer, 2003: 97). It was through his work in ethnomusicology that Maceda discovered

a hitherto unknown musical world may have been of equal magnitude to that experienced in the early decades of the twentieth century by European social scientists and music scholars However, while the seeds of ethnomusicology as sown by these individuals still contained the toxic elements of colonial thought and the superior Western science looking into specimens of less developed humanity, José Maceda saw through his discoveries a gaping void not only in his entire musical understanding but also his own musical life as a non-westerner, and Asian and Filipino The search took on several aspects of shifts and upheavals in consciousness and action – from a rejection of musical heresies such as the superior Western music and the primitivism of others, and abandoning a blossoming piano career in favor of the ascetic but rugged life of the classic ethnomusicologist ... as well as the creation of non-conformist “avant-garde” compositions.

(Santos, 2005: 129)

Through his compositions, Maceda interrogated ‘musical structures and their distinct relationship to Asian cultural and social thought’, and explored the connection between ‘a past doctrine of civilization and a contemporary mode of behaviour and creative imagination that have been moulded by centuries of change that now intervene between the ancient “past” and a dynamic “present”’ (Santos, 2005: 174). In doing so, Maceda defined his identity as a non-Westerner, as Asian and as Filipino, through a thorough examination of his various traditions, and found ‘alternatives to the imposed values of imperialist and dominant cultures, offering paradigms in the exercise of freedom, imagination, and humanism’ (Santos, 2005: 175).

4.2. In Search of Universalism

What Chou Wen-chung started off as a comparative approach to conceptualise the differences between Western and Chinese aesthetics led him to develop the conviction of a ‘re-merger’ of Eastern and Western musical concepts and practices. He believes:

the traditions of Eastern and Western music once shared the same sources and that, after a thousand years of divergence, they are now merging to form the mainstream of a new musical

tradition.

(Chou, 1968-69: 19)

At first, such an idea might seem odd and far-fetched. But Chou Wen-chung was not alone in holding this belief. Takemitsu has voiced a similar thought:

If I may use a somewhat embarrassing term, the “human race” has many different types of music, including modern Western music, all of which influence one another other to form the music of the entire human race. As societies and customs vary, so do their musical expressions. It is important to acknowledge this. Eventually there will be a universal music of the world’s peoples, but that will take a long time ...

(Takemitsu, 1995: 53)

Of course, one could argue that such beliefs held by Asian composers only reflect ‘their anxiety and strategies for mediating the clashes between cultural spaces in which they reside’ (Lau, 2004: 28). To dispute such a claim, one needs to look into the works of some Western composers who could be thought of following the same ethos, but who approach it from a different direction.

Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) was a prime example of a ‘cosmopolitan who never belonged fully to one country or culture’ (Ross, 2012). A groundbreaking composer, musical thinker and teacher, Busoni was born near Florence, and spent his childhood in Trieste before studying in Vienna, Graz, and Leipzig. He also lived in Helsinki, Moscow, Boston, New York, Berlin and Bologna. As his biographer Antony Beaumont observed, although cosmopolitanism was more or less thrust upon Busoni, it ‘helped him to realize just how provincial were the seemingly majestic borders dividing one country from another and he began to formulate a concept of a universal music’ (Beaumont, 1985: 23). In his pamphlet *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*, Busoni remarked that:

The creator should take over no traditional law in blind belief, which would make him view his own creative endeavour, from the outset, as an exception contrasting with that law ... The function of the creative artist consists in making laws, not in following laws ready made. He who follows such laws, ceases to be a creator.

(Busoni, 1911: 22)

For Busoni, one of the crucial factors in creating a ‘universal music’ lies in interrogating our relationship with existing traditions, having the willingness and

readiness to make our own rules, and re-inventing our heritage according to our own artistic needs. Similarly, Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001) expressed the need for a universal music, but warned:

As it has thus far developed, European music is ill-suited to providing the world with a field of expression on a planetary scale, as a universality, and risks isolating and severing itself from historical necessities.

(Xenakis, 1971: 194)

Conceived structurally according to scientifically defined behaviours such as crystallisation (Varèse and Chou, 1966: 16) and the calculus of probabilities (Xenakis, 1971: 183, 191-192), the compositions of Varèse and Xenakis sought to attain ‘a higher form of universality than Western music had achieved through tonality and its putative heir, serialism’ (Tenzer, 2003: 98). Maceda rejected serialism, understanding the music of Varèse and Xenakis as part of Western music’s search of a global macro-universality (as opposed to the pro-European mainstream micro-universalities such as serialism). Maceda once wrote of Xenakis’ music as

an aesthetic eulogy to science, and his music is expressed in a language more powerful than the use of its hardware – the computer, laser, and the orchestra. His software is logic, and he has for his models mathematicians and men of Greek thought. However, it behoves the musician who is in direct contact with a native thinking to look for other elements of musical thought and apply them in a musical construction, using a language as significant as any being used today in the avant garde.

(Maceda, 1979: 166)

Maceda’s admiration for Xenakis’ music is obvious. What is of particular interest to our discussion in Maceda’s case is that, as an Asian composer, he realised the possibilities of developing musical thinking based on the individual’s native musical culture, and more importantly, he discovered the potential of finding a personal musical language which could be considered no lesser than the well established Western European ‘mainstream’, or the avant-garde as Maceda specified.

Through his research, Maceda explored properties and philosophies unique to indigenous music of the Philippines and Southeast Asia. This included the oral transmission of literature and music, the concept of infinity (i.e. constructing music using repeated sounds with no stresses, the use of drones with or without melody), and an emphasis on timbre rather than melody and balance with nature (Maceda,

1979; Maceda, 1986).

One of the most unique principles of Maceda's music is his emphasis on the preservation of the authenticity of colours – be that instrumental or the textural. He believed that 'the transfer of a musical practice from one culture to another is not always a preservation of the original ... it tends in certain instances to admit a certain amount of dilution' (Maceda, 1971, 16). Therefore, in order to retain as much 'authenticity' as possible, it was not surprising that Maceda – not unlike Chou Wen-chung, with his 'mapping' of East and West – strove to find the commonality between indigenous Filipino music and the kind of Western music that he came to admire (i.e., Varèse and Xenakis) as the foundation for his compositional thinking. Contrary to the works of Chou Wen-chung (who wrote no work for indigenous Chinese instruments) and Tōru Takemitsu (who only wrote a handful for indigenous Japanese instruments, including *Eclipse* (1966) for biwa and shakuhachi and *November Steps* (1967) for biwa, shakuhachi and orchestra), the majority of Maceda's works were written for indigenous Filipino instruments. This was partly motivated by his encyclopaedic knowledge of these instruments (Maceda, 1998) following his four-decade long research into the subject.

5. The Memory of All That

Tradition and memory are inseparable. As suggested by Eliot's idea of 'pastness and presence of the past' (Section 2.1) and Krenek's 'system of value' (Section 2.4), tradition cannot be created on the spur of the moment. It is built up over time, and the existence of traditions relies on the preservation of memories. Therefore, for composers, their personal memories, and hence experiences, are the most precious ingredients to their work. They make each composer's work different from their peers. With Ligeti's 'giant web' metaphor in mind, this research would be incomplete without the consideration of a composer whose works and ideas play a crucial role in the formation of my compositional practice and philosophy towards music. Incidentally, he dealt with the issues of tradition in intriguing ways which I found useful in filling in some of the gaps in understanding the puzzle of 'imagined' tradition.

Lukas Foss (1922-2009) was born in Berlin. As a young German Jew who fled

the Third Reich, he first went to France, and eventually settled in America in 1937, where he lived for the rest of his life. Foss had to contend with three different heritages – those of a Jew, a German and that of a newly arrived young American immigrant. Each of these influences had their respective impacts on Foss' development as a composer. All through his life, Foss continuously employed new means of expression and execution for his musical ideas, which he explained:

With every piece I write, I try to solve a new problem. That's why I so often change techniques – which are not what people call style because they mix up style and technique. Actually I don't change style, because style is my personality. I make things my own, and the more things you make your own, the richer your vocabulary is and the more fascinating your style is, and your compositional techniques are like vocabularies. Of course, the skill of the composer lies in the fact that he/she is the one to choose which technique to use to express the musical idea at the best of all possible ways.

(Yiu, 2002: 22-23)

The extent to which Foss radically changed compositional techniques between pieces – an approach echoing Krenek – was considerable. Yet, amid this wild eclecticism, the essence of Foss' music can be traced back to his three strands of heritage. For the Germanic heritage, there were Foss' lifelong fascination with the music of J. S. Bach (in *Symphony of Chorales* (1955-58), *Non-Improvisation* (1964), *Cello Concert* (1966) and *Phorion* (1967), which later became the last movement of *Baroque Variations*), the influence of his one-time teacher Paul Hindemith (in *Second Piano Concerto* (1949, rev. 1952) and his only full-length opera *Griffelkin* (1955)) and the music by Second Viennese School composers (in *Time Cycle* (1960) and *Elytres* (1964)). His Jewish heritage, on the other hand, is overtly represented in the two biblical cantatas (*Song of Anguish* (1945) and *Song of Songs* (1946)) and *Adon Olom* (1947). Last but not least, there was Foss' loving fascination with his adopted homeland – ranging from Copland-esque Americana (*The Prairie* (1944), *For Aaron* (2002)) to the experimental spirit (*Echoi* (1960-63), *Geod* (1969), *American Cantata* (1975)).

Beside his magpie attitude towards compositional techniques and his broad imagination, it was Foss' inventive use of quotations and parodies that intrigued and excited me. His unusual treatments (or deconstructions, more precisely) of musical fragments by Handel, Scarlatti and Bach in his *Baroque Variations* (1967) left a lasting impression on me. It was the experience of hearing this work for the first time

that I discovered the emotional impact a musical work can make on its listeners, once some form of identification with the material was established. Foss' compositions are musical statements made 'about the complex network of remembered and misremembered experiences which shape and colour our perception of our-selves and the world' (Bye, 1997: 4). Therefore they are especially useful for the purpose of tackling the memory-driven issue of traditions.

Another aspect of Foss' works relevant to this research is his unexpected combination of compositional techniques and musical materials. Take, for example, *Baroque Variations*: despite the firm association the materials have with a distinctive period of Western music, the choices (one for each of the three movements) of compositional process and treatments are strikingly novel and alien to the ways the materials would naturally call for. As a result, listening to the work is not dissimilar the looking at the world through a heavily distorting looking glass. This strategy of combining materials with surprising treatments to create something new is one way of 're-inventing heritage'.

The crucial factor for the inclusion of Lukas Foss in this research narrative is two-fold: his unique and subtle way of dealing with the issue of traditions, as well as the important role he and his music played in my coming of age as a composer. It was hearing his *Baroque Variations* that prompted me to consider the possibility of being a composer. Therefore, his music inevitably became an essential part of my 'tradition'. What I continue to find inspiring is his personal and non-confrontational ways of tackling the issue of displacement and rootlessness through his eclecticism, which

is thus far from being a denial of authenticity If his virtuosity seems to lack a core compared with that of Britten, we cannot attribute that merely to the fact that Britten's genius is the deeper rooted in human experience; there is also the fact that Britten had an English tradition, and in particular Purcell, to give direction to his eclecticism.

(Mellors, 1987: 229)

6. Where Do I Belong?

As a Chinese composer who grew up in a British colony, the shadow of Western learning inevitably loomed large. Even though geographically close to China,

traditional Chinese music never made an impact on me as it was not included in the school curriculum in Hong Kong.

My deep-rooted interest in Cantonese popular music and its predecessor *shidai qu* inevitably formed the core of my musical tradition, as it was the genre of music I was most familiar with. Western art music was only introduced to me later, even though the music I write can readily be identified with such tradition. With that in mind, relevant conditions must be taken into account in the consideration of my ‘imagined’ tradition. The ideas and criticisms drawn from the approaches taken by the aforementioned Asian composers who operated in the realm of Western-centric art music (i.e. Chou, Maceda and Takemitsu) provide me with an impetus for self-examination. They have also given me a basic framework of critique to help me navigate through my own labyrinth of traditions, and construct a relevant backdrop of cultural references. For the same reason, the influence of Lukas Foss and my admiration for English art music needs to be taken into account.

With his background in rock music and his experience of growing up in an ex-colony and thus feeling that he had no musical tradition, Denys Bouliane’s attitude of ‘playing with tradition’ resonates with me strongly. In retrospect, I have been playing with traditions myself in my own casual, non-systematic way. This unpremeditated sharing of feeling and approach towards the issue of tradition draws me closer to Bouliane’s idea and music. His experience and solutions for dealing with traditions provides me with useful insight and guidelines for choosing my subject matters and materials in the compositions as discussed in the next section.

My acquaintance with Ligeti’s ‘giant web’ metaphor of culture (via Bouliane) proves also to be extremely useful. The inevitability of influences implied by such an open model enables me to consider a wide range of traditions which I consider relevant to me, each with a different degree of magnitude of influence placed accordingly on the ‘giant web’. It is with this model that I can finally place all the disparate traditions that I relate to in an appropriately measured, coherent framework. Then I can construct, or imagine, my own tradition, a composite of all these different strands of influence from which I can draw inspiration. This approach, I believe, will allow my music to suggest a higher degree of unity and coherence, and hence a perceived ‘personality’ in the music which is unique to me.

7. The Compositions

The six compositions discussed below were written as part of this research. Although there has already been a sense of identity-awareness running through my earlier works, these six compositions are products of an in-depth examination and interrogation of my upbringing, experiences and the roles they play in the construction of my ‘imagined’ heritage. Different aspects of these pieces – their conceptions, the philosophies, choices of material, structural thinking and the overall aesthetic outlooks – are tradition-conscious. Each of these pieces is an example of the re-invention of my heritage.

I start with an examination of the importance of my two homes – Hong Kong and England – and the influences of their associated musical traditions in *Northwest Wind* and *Dead Letters* respectively. I then move on to evaluate my relationship with a more distant Chinese (inspired by the experiences of Chou Wen-chung and José Maceda) in *Jieshi*. In *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss*, I will examine my Western art music root via the work and ideas of the strongest influence on me, Lukas Foss.

With my cosmopolitan upbringing in Hong Kong, it is natural for me to think on a global level. The concept of playing with multiple traditions is explored in the last two works of the research. In *Les Etoiles au Front*, the ‘scope’ of traditions is widened, and commonalities between different cultures – French and Chinese in this case – are explored via the use of non-musical resources. In the final work *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*, all the ideas related to my ‘imagined’ heritage explored so far in the research will be synthesised to build a more comprehensive vision of my ‘imagined’ tradition. New concepts such as inclusiveness and stylistic stability are exploited. With the large number of influences referred, *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* can be seen as an extreme example of heritage re-invention.

7.1. *Northwest Wind* (2010)

Instrumentation:	flute (doubling piccolo), clarinet in B \flat (doubling bass clarinet), harp, viola and double bass
Duration:	10'00"
First	25 th March 2010, at South London Gallery, London, with Lontano, conducted by
Performance:	Odaline de la Martinez.
Notes:	<i>Northwest Wind</i> was commissioned by Lontano, with financial support from the Bliss Trust. It won the chamber category of BASCA British Composer Awards 2010.

In two of my previous compositions, *Night Shanghai* (2005, scored for a sextet of flute, clarinet, accordion, piano, violin and cello), and *Maomao Yü* (2009, scored for erhu, pipa, yangqin, guzheng and piano), I investigated the influence of Western music in Chinese popular music at two specific points in the twentieth century – in the 1920s when jazz was introduced into China (in *Maomao Yü*, based on the eponymous song generally considered to be the first ever Chinese popular song, written by Li Jinhui (1891-1967)), and in 1940s when the influence of South American rhythms were prominent (in *Night Shanghai*).

Since completing *Maomao Yü*, I had had the idea of making these two pieces part of a triptych paying tribute to the genre of music known as *shidai qu*, or ‘songs of the era’ (to which *Maomao Yü* belongs). It is a forerunner of Cantonese pop music that occupied the foreground of my musical consciousness during my formative years. In my mind, if there were any true sense of ‘indigenous tradition’ from someone who was born in Hong Kong, this line of musical heritage, originally a ‘fusion of jazz and Chinese folk melodies’ (Jones, 2001: 76) would be just as fitting as it could possibly be. Because the influence of Western popular music on the evolution of *shidai qu*⁴ was not limited to jazz (i.e. foxtrot in this case), other Western dance forms also made their mark in the process, and therefore, waltz and tango also have their place in my musical tradition. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to open my research with a work that tied in with my continuous fascination with one of the musical traditions closest

⁴ The genre *shidai qu* was later termed *yellow music*, or pornographic music, by the ruling socialist party in Mainland China for social and political reasons. For more details, see Andrew F. Jones’ comprehensive study *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Jones, 2001).

to me historically, with the benefit of a doctoral research structure.

As a composer of Chinese origin, I had always avoided the use of pentatonic mode – except for the purpose of parody in *The Original Chinese Conjuror*, and the intrinsic pentatonic nature of the raw materials used in *Night Shanghai* and *Maomao Yü* – owing to its often problematic and tainted connotations in Western musical contexts (Locke, 2009; Said, 1978). As an act of breaking free from such taboo, in *Northwest Wind* I set out to own the pentatonic mode in an unapologetic way, and at a deeper level, re-inventing its creative possibilities in a personal fashion.

Technically, one of the biggest challenges of using pentatonic mode to create the type of music I want to write was its limitation in creating different degrees of tension. This is due to the sonorous nature of the common pentatonic scale, or the lack of potential chromaticism. Inspired by Bouliane's creation of 'extended modes' (Section 3.1), I set myself the task of creating my own system of manipulating pentatonic modes to enlarge the palette of colour obtainable from using pentatonic mode, or modes.

After some investigation, I discovered Chou Wen-chung had developed a highly complex system of organising pitches called 'Variable Modes', based on the concept of I-Ching (Lai, 1993-94; Lai, 1997; Lai, 2009). However, it is not based on pentatonic modes and most of his compositions written since the mid-1960s, when he started using these 'modes', sound remarkably similar, at least to my ears, to music written by other Western composers, particularly Anton Webern and Chou's mentor, Edgard Varèse. Having considered this approach, I opted to seek alternatives by developing my own system of deriving musical materials using pentatonic modes from scratch.

The inspiration for my invention came from Stephen Jones' *Folk Music of China – Living Instrumental Traditions* (1995), an insightful book on non-commercialised folk music-making in China. One passage in this book made a lasting impression on me regarding 'modulation' in Chinese music:

Temporary modulation, or the appearance of it, is common. Often the key a fifth above the main key is explored; within a basic scale of 1 2 3 5 6, the sequence 7 6 5 is introduced, substituting 7 for 1; phrases such as 7 2' 7 6 5 then created a temporary modulation to a key a fifth higher, effectively 3 5 3 2 1 in the new key. This ambiguity in scale, and the tension between two scales a fifth apart, is a basic device in Chinese instrumental music.

(Jones, 1995: 118-119)

According to Jones, moving from one pentatonic mode to another – a perfect fifth above in this case – by introducing the leading note while removing the tonic means that the original dominant will become the tonic of the new pentatonic mode. My first impression of the system, in its most simplistic form, is:

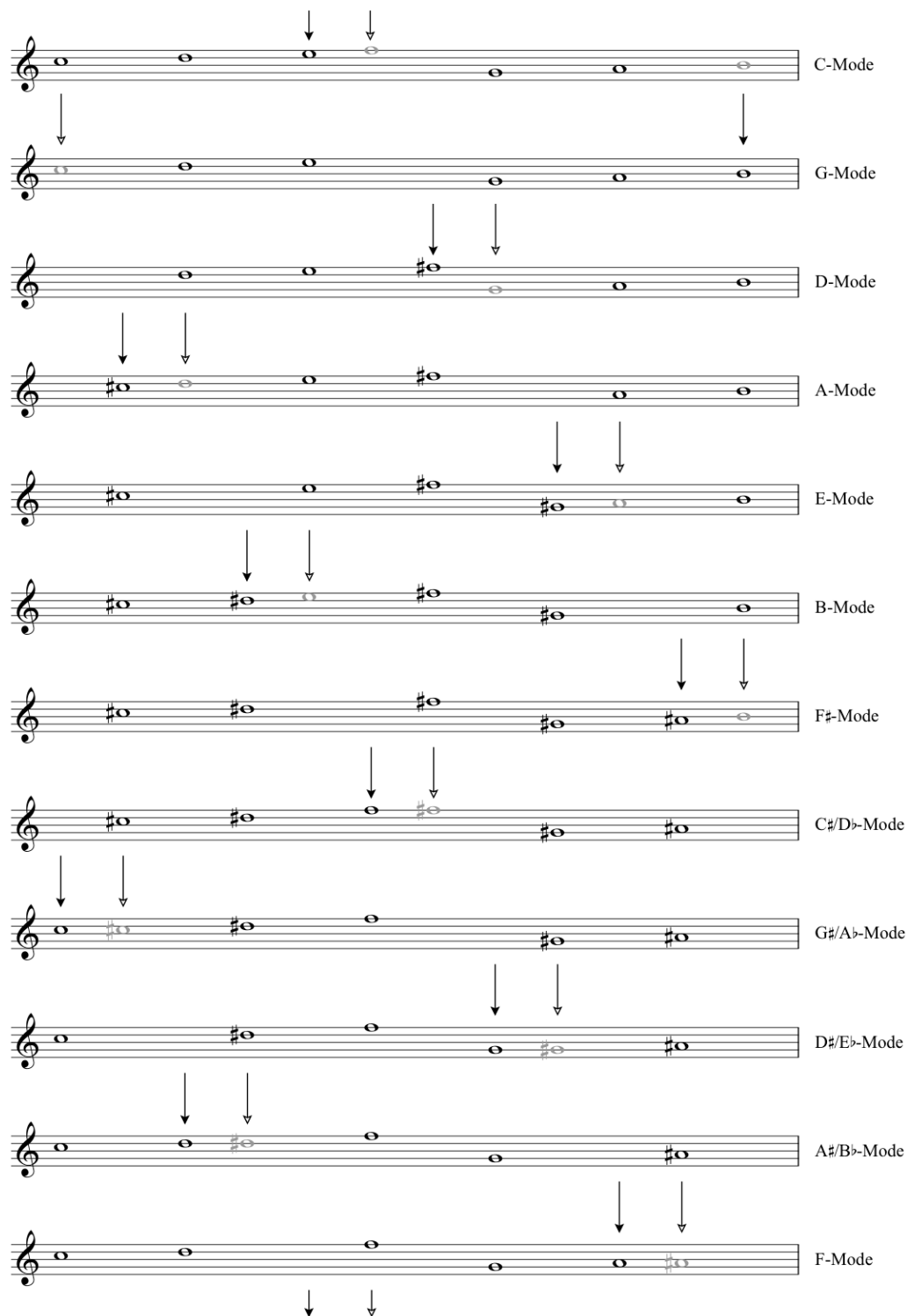


Figure 1 Basic pentatonic mode modulation matrix – substituting tonics with leading notes. Black-headed arrows indicate incoming pitches, white-headed arrows indicate outgoing ones.

By applying a variable-sized filter to this matrix, for example a ‘3-mode filter’ on the C, G and D-mode, only C, D, E, F#, G, A and B will be made available at a time. This method of ‘filtering’ pitches is not dissimilar to the basic idea behind Iannis Xenakis’ ‘sieve theory’. Expressing his dissatisfaction with total chromatic music in his conversation with Bálint András Varga, Xenakis stated:

After the disintegration of tonality Western music used the totality of the chromatic scale without making any difference between the individual notes. It led to a deterioration in the quality of music because the chromatic scale is neutral. In order to get a more interesting, more complex scale, we have to choose between the notes.

(Varga, 1996: 93)

Near the time when I started work on the new work, 4th June 2009, marked the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre. Therefore, it felt appropriate to look for materials relating to the Tiananmen Square Protest in order to commemorate this anniversary.

The core material of *Northwest Wind* is a celebrated folk song from the northwest region of China, titled *Xintianyou*. *Xibeifeng* (or ‘northwest wind’) is a musical style that originated in the early 1980s, and by the middle of the same decade had evolved into the first distinctively Chinese form of rock music. It drew heavily on the folk-song traditions of the north-western part of China, especially from the Shanxi, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces, of which *Xintianyou* is a prime example. These traditions were combined with a Western-style fast tempo, a strong beat, an aggressive bass line and was often sung in a loud, forceful manner:



Figure 2 First part of *Xintianyou*.

Xibeifeng represented the musical branch of the large-scale cultural movement called *Xungen* (or root seeking), which also manifested itself in literature and in film. Most of the lyrics underpinning the *xibeifeng* songs were heavily political and highly

idealistic. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that arguably the first Chinese rock song, a 1986 *xibEIFeng* anthem titled *Nothing to My Name* by Cui Jian (b.1961), became the de facto anthem of the student protestors at Tiananmen Square in 1989.

In *Northwest Wind*, the opening phrase of *Xintianyou* is introduced by the solo viola in a rather elaborated manner at the beginning of the work:

Quasi una fantasia, andante (♩ = 80 c.)
poco sul pont., poco vib.

Viola
f fruido ma espressivo f f f

Vln.
8 f (arco) mf f sfp sfp

Vln.
13 f p sfp sfp f

Figure 3 *Northwest Wind*, opening viola solo, bars 1-18.

This melody, or fragments of it, makes many re-appearances throughout the work. From rehearsal mark C, the mechanism of the aforementioned pentatonic mode modulation matrix comes into play. Initially, a small 1-mode filter is applied to C-mode of the matrix, producing:

C
56 Allegro e poco meccanico (♩ = 92)

Fl.
p mp p mp p mp sim. mp

Cl.
-

Hp.
mf secco p sub. sim. mp

Vla.
mf

Db.
-

C
Allegro e poco meccanico (♩ = 92)

Figure 4 *Northwest Wind*, bars 56-61, with C-mode active only.

As the music progresses, the filter size is increased to allow more pitches to be

97

Fl. *mp* *p* *mp* *mf* *sfz* *sfz*

Cl. *mp* *p* *mf*

Hp. *mp secco* *mf* Cx / Gx

Vla. *p* *p sub.* *p sub.*

Db. *p* *p* arco miss *p* *miss*

The remainder of the piece is composed by a constant juxtaposition of this system and the proliferation and fragmentation of the opening viola melody. Usually, fragments of the original melody – small enough to be contained within a single pentatonic mode (e.g. G mode in the flute part between bars 190 and 194) or two pentatonic modes a fifth apart (e.g. G and D modes in the harp part between bars 194 and 198) – are used as a ‘sieves’ for the filtering process, i.e. only notes belonging to these modes are allowed to be used:

I
Meno mosso (♩ = 100)

190

Fl.

B. Cl.

Hp.

Vla.

Db.

193

Fl.

B. Cl.

Hp.

Vla.

Db.

198

Fl.

B. Cl.

Hp.

Vla.

Db.

molto rit.

D₄, C₄, B₃ /
E₃, F₄, G₄, A₄

Figure 6 Northwest Wind, bars 190-201.

The application of pentatonic modes in *Northwest Wind* creates an allusion to Chinese music, but the rapidly changing filter, which controls the number of pitches used at a certain moment in time, allows the tight control of different pentatonic modes at work at the same time. Their superimposition creates a sense of chromaticism with a folksy flavour, hence creating an impression of folk materials being employed, even at moments when the original melody is not used.

The decision of using a slightly unorthodox combination of instruments in *Northwest Wind* was influenced by the pentatonic mode modulation process. The note-switching nature of this process suggested to me the harp as the most suitable instrument to execute this procedure due to the analogical pitch-altering mechanism in a standard concert pedal-operated harp. For example, the music between rehearsal marks C to E (i.e. bars 56-116) was originally written as a solo harp passage, starting with the pentatonic mode in C, and gradually introducing extra notes by expanding the 'filter'. This music was then reassigned to the flute and clarinet and the harp was rescored to play individual chords that accentuate the harmonic profile, assisted by the viola and double bass.

With the harp as a starting point, I then decided to create a piece for an ensemble with a slightly expanded line-up from that used in Debussy's *Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp* (1915) – a work which often induces association with French music in its listeners' minds. This association, more often than not, is applicable to its numerous descendants, including Takemitsu's *And Then I Knew 'twas Wind* (1992), in which the composer suggests the sound of koto by using extended playing techniques on the harp. My intention was to dilute the 'Frenchness' evoked by such instrumentation with the extensive application of pentatonic mode, which is intrinsically Oriental by suggestion. Rather than avoiding the issue of Orientalism, I wanted to embrace it knowingly. In *Northwest Wind*, pentatonic modes are treated as musical objects, rather than musical device to evoke any 'exotic associations' (Locke, 2009: 278).

Northwest Wind gives a conscious nod to Chinese music, as do its companion pieces, *Night Shanghai* and *Maomao Yü*. But unlike them, the application of an invented system of pitch 'ordering' based on the modulation of pentatonic modes adds an extra layer of objectivity to the work, which is less prominent in its predecessors. In doing so, I attempted to adjust my distance with Chinese folk music, *shidai qu* and in a lesser degree, French music on the 'giant web' accordingly.

7.2. *Dead Letters* (2010)

Instrumentation:	tenor and piano
Duration:	15'00"
First	25 th July 2010, Nicholas Mulroy (tenor) and John Reid (piano) at Tardebigge
Performance:	Church, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, as part of the 2010 Celebrating English Song Series.
Text:	Gerard Manley Hopkins, Walt Whitman, Digby Mackworth Dolben, Robert Bridges and Alfred, Lord Tennyson.
Notes:	<i>Dead Letters</i> was commissioned by Celebrating English Song.

As a stark contrast to *Northwest Wind*, *Dead Letters* sets out to be an examination of the language and social context (in this case, sexual repression in particular) of my adopted country, exclusively in a genre unmistakably British in origin. It is a tribute to composers of English songs whom I admire greatly – John Dowland, Henry Purcell, Ivor Gurney, Benjamin Britten, Peter Warlock and Gerald Finzi, to name a few. It is also a meditation on the impact of their music on me as a non-native English-speaking composer setting English texts to music. Some songs in *Dead Letters* allude to the music of these composers – in one case, a direct quotation – and some songs were composed in styles which these composers would never have contemplated.

Since the late nineteenth century, composers from my adopted country, England, have been writing collections of songs solely for the purpose of concert performances, instead of for religious or theatrical purposes. By the mid-twentieth century, the genre of the British song cycle had already become established genre and composers such as Benjamin Britten (1913-76), Gerald Finzi (1901-56), Lennox Berkeley (1903-89) and many other composers have produced works for voice (or voices) and piano. To me, song cycle (with English text) is a quintessentially English genre, and therefore be the perfect medium for me to use for exploring the English strand of my 'imagined' tradition.

For *Dead Letters*, I wanted to compose a song cycle about unrequited love with a strong homosexual undertone. My starting point was the pomes and life of the Jesuit priest and poet Gerald Manley Hopkins, after discovering his unpublished music in an article (O'Connell, 2007).

Born into a devout High Anglican family, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

later attended Balliol College, in the midst of the Oxford Movement of Christian revival. Under the sponsorship of Cardinal Newman, Hopkins converted to Roman Catholicism and then entered the Society of Jesus. An important personal element of this conversion was Hopkins' intense though chaste attachment to a young religious poet, Digby Mackworth Dolben (1848-1867, a cousin of the poet Robert Bridges), who drowned at the age of nineteen. In a letter to his friend Bridges, who was to edit both Dolben and Hopkins posthumously, Hopkins confessed a deep empathy with Walt Whitman (Hopkins, 2002: 254-256). Though he was referring to Whitman's mode of metrical breakthrough, homoerotic elements certainly formed part of the attraction for the withdrawn Jesuit professor of Greek (Martin, 1991: 350, 392n).

In my previous song cycle *Faerie Tales* (2008), I took inspiration from Arthur Conan Doyle's interest in spiritualism and fairies. I assembled texts by various writers either linked to Conan Doyle, directly and indirectly – Rudyard Kipling, John Kipling, J. M. Barrie, or texts about fairies and the First World War by other writers (John Keats, Shakespeare and Wilfred Owen), and interlaced them with Conan Doyle's own writings. I adopted a similar procedure in assembling the texts for *Dead Letters*. Two poems by Manley Hopkins, *You see that I have come to passion's end* and *I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day*, became the starting point of the work (the title of the cycle was taken from the latter poem). Branching out from Manley Hopkins as a central figure, texts by various writers were chosen for their historical or thematic relevance in relation to him:

Song in <i>Dead Letters</i>	Source of Text
<i>Remembrance</i>	Robert Bridges' memoir on Digby Dolben (published as a preface to Dolben's collected poems in 1915). Bridges (1844-1830), a cousin of Dolben and a good friend of Manley Hopkins, acted as the editor to both Manley Hopkins' and Dolben's posthumous collections of poetry. It was also he who introduced the two men to one another.
<i>Pastoral</i>	Setting of a poem by Dolben, numbered 23 in the <i>Collected Poems</i> . It is set in its entirety.
<i>Canzonetta</i>	First of the two settings of text by Walt Whitman (1819-1892). In several letters, Manley Hopkins expressed his keen interest in the poetry of Whitman. Through this connection, two excerpts of Whitman's <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855) are included as part of the song cycle.
<i>Serenade</i>	Setting of Dolben's poem, numbered 28 in the <i>Collected Poems</i> .

<i>Sonnet</i>	Second setting of Whitman.
<i>Aria</i>	Setting of Manley Hopkins' <i>You see that I have come to passion's end.</i>
<i>Nocturne</i>	A snippet taken from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's <i>In Memoriam A. H. H. OBIT MDCCCXXXIII.</i>
<i>Elegy</i>	Setting of Manley Hopkins' <i>I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.</i>

Table 2 Sources of text used in *Dead Letters*.

Various musical allusions and references to English music are made throughout the cycle. In the first song, *Remembrance*, as the climax is approached, the word 'I' is repeatedly set in a stuttering fashion:

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Remembrance' from the cycle 'Dead Letters'. It covers bars 19 to 21. The top staff is for the Tenor (T.) and the bottom staff is for the Piano (Pno.). The Tenor part begins with a series of eight 'I' notes, each followed by a short rest, creating a stuttering effect. The lyrics 'I wrapt from him a' are written below the notes. The Piano part features a melodic line with a trill marked '(8)' and a triplet marked '3'. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' and the time signature is 3/4.

Figure 7 *Dead Letters – Remembrance*, bars 19-21.

This is a deliberate gestural reference to Billy Budd's stuttering in Britten's eponymous opera (1951). The device of placing a short prelude of a familiar character is inspired by the opera's prologue in which Captain Edward Fairfax Vere recalls his encounter with Billy Budd on the *Indomitable*.

In the opening bars of the second song, *Pastoral*, an allusion is made to the piano introduction of the first song *Summer Schemes* of Gerald Finzi's *Earth and Air and Rain*, Op. 15 (1928-35):

The image shows the piano introduction to the first song 'Summer Schemes' from Gerald Finzi's 'Earth and Air and Rain', Op. 15. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' and the time signature is 3/4. The score shows a melodic line with a trill marked '(8)' and a triplet marked '3'. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' and the time signature is 3/4.

Figure 8 Piano introduction to Finzi's *Summer Schemes*, from *Earth and Air and Rain*, Op.15. Copyright 1936 by Boosey & Co. Ltd.

The first four notes played on the right hand in the Finzi song are used as the opening phase of the vocal line in *Pastoral*, transposed up a perfect fourth:

Allegro grazioso (♩ = 120)

mf carefree

Tenor

We hur - ry on, nor pass-ing note the round - ed hed - ges

Allegro grazioso (♩ = 120)

Piano

mp *mf* *mf sub.* *mp*

Figure 9 *Dead Letters – Pastoral*, bars 1-6.

While the third song *Canzonetta* is free from any quotation and allusion – an opportunity for me to integrate into the ‘Englishness’ without the help of any pre-existing material, the fourth, *Serenade*, is a complete reworking of Thomas Campion’s *Your Faire Lookes Enflame My Desire*, from part one of his *A Booke of Ayres* (1601). Campion (1567-1620), a contemporary of John Dowland, was a poet as well as a composer. This song is chosen for the meaning of its original text:

Your faire lookes enflame my desire:	Then come, sweetest, come,
Quench it againe with loue.	My lips with kisses gracing;
Stay, O striue not still to retire:	Here let vs harbour all alone,
Doe not in humane proue.	Die, die in sweete embracing.
If loue may perswade,	
Loues pleasures, deere, denie not.	Will you now so timely depart,
Heere is a silent grouie shade;	And not returne againe?
O tarrie then, and flie not.	Your sight lends such life to my hart
	That to depart is paine.
Haue I seaz'd my heauenly delight	Feare yeelds no delay,
In this vnhaunted groue ?	Securenes helpeth pleasure:
Time shall now her furie requite	Then, till the time giues safer stay,
With the reuenge of loue.	O farewell, my liues treasure.

Thomas Campion, XVII, A Booke of Ayres (1601)

Figure 10 shows the musical score for Thomas Campion's *Your Faire Lookes Enflame My Desire*, bars 1-6. The score is in G minor, 3/4 time. It features a Voice part and a Piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Your faire lookes en - flame my de - sire: Quench it a - gaine with love. Stay, O striue not still to re - tire: Doe not in hu - mane proue."

Figure 10 Thomas Campion's *Your Faire Lookes Enflame My Desire*, bars 1-6.

In *Serenade*, the original text by Campion is stripped away and the harmonic skeleton of the song is retained, modified and redressed with the text by Dolben:

Figure 11 shows the musical score for *Dead Letters – Serenade*, bars 1-8. The score is in G minor, 3/4 time. It features a Tenor part and a Piano accompaniment. The tempo is Andantino (♩ = 72). The lyrics are: "My Love, and once a - gain my no - more un - til the end,"

Figure 11 *Dead Letters – Serenade*, bars 1-8.

Aria functions as a dramatic turn in the work. After three moderately slow songs, it felt necessary for there to be an up-tempo number in order to provide a strong contrast with what had gone before and with what followed. There are several reasons for setting this Manley Hopkins in a mélange of tango, foxtrot and waltz,

interchanged in a frantic and short-breathed fashion. Firstly, it is to suggest an impression of instability to match the restlessness and uneasiness implied in the Manley Hopkins poem. Secondly, this application of polystylism within a single song, to my knowledge, has not been attempted by any of the composers to whom this song cycle is set out to be a homage to. To a certain extent, the element of imitation is momentarily transformed into an element of critique; as a result, the homage takes a rather different tone.

The use of polystylism (which will become more prominent in *Les Etoiles au Front* (Section 7.5) and *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* (Section 7.6)) is a recurrent feature in my music. It is a technique employed by some of the composers mentioned earlier, notably Stravinsky and Foss. In their cases, styles vary between different works as a by-product of exploring new artistic possibilities. Although there is a similar element in my music, my main interest in polystylism lies in its capacity to create a sense of simultaneousness within a single work, or even in a single passage. This form of stylistic amalgamation provides me a workable, and dramatically plausible syntax for realising the impressions of crosstalk of different cultural influences affecting me in the ‘giant web’ cultural metaphor. In the case of *Aria*, such intention is complimented by the notion of mental instability created by the erratic changes of musical style in such a short duration, even though the cultural referencing is primarily localised to English music (or more specifically, English art songs) and poetry.

Similar to *Canzonetta*, no conscious musical quotation or imitation from external sources takes place in the last two songs; only internal references are made. For example, the last eight bars of the last song, *Elegy*, is a reworking of the harmonic progression from the end of the second song, *Pastoral*.

Another allusion to English art songs made in *Dead Letters* lies within its structure. The song cycle was to be premiered in a concert celebrating the centenary of the birth of the tenor, Sir Peter Pears (1910-86). To mark this occasion, I decided to give each movement of *Dead Letters* a title, some of them borrowed from Britten’s *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* (1943), as a knowing tribute to both Pears and Britten. A comparison of the titles of the movements of both works highlights the cultural referencing at work on a non-musical level:

<i>Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings</i>	<i>Dead Letters</i>
<i>Prologue</i>	<i>Remembrance</i>
<i>Pastoral</i>	<i>Pastoral</i>
<i>Nocturne</i>	<i>Canzonetta</i>
<i>Elegy</i>	<i>Serenade</i>
<i>Dirge</i>	<i>Sonnet</i>
<i>Hymn</i>	<i>Aria</i>
<i>Sonnet</i>	<i>Nocturne</i>
<i>Epilogue</i>	<i>Elegy</i>

Table 3 Movement titles from *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* and *Dead Letters*.

Dead Letters is a tribute to a culture – both music and literature – I came to know and love when I was just beginning to write music. My early introduction to the works of Britten, Elgar, Finzi, Holst, Vaughan Williams and Walton when I first arrived in England left a lasting impression on me. Over the years, English music gradually took on a more prominent position in my ‘imagined’ traditions as I have spent more than half my life in my adopted country. English music became as important to me as Cantonese popular music; my related distances to these two sources on the ‘giant web’ have changed. But more importantly, my relative distances to these influences (as well as others to be discussed and discovered) are constantly changed according to the way I see fit when I come to write a different work. This point cannot be more sharply proved in the next work.

7.3. *Jieshi* (2011)

Instrumentation: qin, 2 violins, viola and violoncello

Duration: 10’00”

First 27th May 2011, Li Xiangting and the English Chamber Orchestra Ensemble, at the

Performance: British Museum, London, as part of the 2011 British Museum Chinese Four Arts Summer School.

Notes: *Jieshi* was commissioned by The Prince's Charities Foundation (China).

Immediately after an in-depth exploration of the impact of English art songs on me as a composer in *Dead Letters*, a rare opportunity arose which would allow me, following the footsteps of Chou Wen-chung and José Maceda, to explore an Asian tradition which could have been big a influence on me if I grew up in a different

environment. Unlike Chinese rock music from the 1980s as explored in *Northwest Wind*, the musical materials that I was to encounter in this new work was rather alien to me, even though it is of Chinese origin.

Jieshi, is written for qin (Chinese seven-string zither) and a string quartet, based on the ancient qin melody *Youlan* (or ‘*Secluded Orchid*’). *Youlan*, or *Jieshi Diao Youlan* in full (meaning ‘*Secluded Orchid in Stone Tablet Mode*’), is believed to be the oldest surviving notated music from the Far East, dating back to Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) (Liang, 1972: 224-229; Kouwenhoven, 2001: 46).

Although being ethnically Chinese, my exposure to qin music has been minimal due to the lack of interest in this instrument when I was growing up in Hong Kong. After discovering the story of Chou Wen-chung being challenged by Nicolas Slonimsky about his relationship with traditional Chinese music – which eventually led him to study qin playing and literature for two years in the 1950s (Chang, 2001: 100), I started thinking critically about my own relationship with traditional Chinese music. Even though I share Chou’s sentiment, without the time and resources available for me to immerse myself into the intense study of qin playing in order to complete this project, I use Stravinsky’s attitude towards Russian music (as discussed in Section 2.2) as a point of departure, viewing Chinese music from ‘a vantage point’ (Stravinsky, 1982: 98), with an observational, objective approach.

Youlan has been used in compositions by Chinese composers, most notably in the second movement titled *Secluded Orchid* of Zhou Long’s *Rites of Chimes* (2000). I was fully aware of my lack of in-depth knowledge of literature of qin music and the philosophy behind its playing, therefore I did not feel it appropriate to simply dismantle a cultural artefact such as *Youlan* and reconstruct it into a fantasy-type composition, as in the case of Zhou Long. In my mind, the historical and cultural background of the raw material demanded to be treated with respect. As a result, I decided my compositional approach was to be as objective and transparent as possible. I wanted to write a work that could emphasise the unique quality of *Youlan*, the intriguing sound of qin, and most of all, the expertise of the soloist involved in the project.

My solution was conceptually simple. With one of the finest qin players in the world at my disposal for the first performance, I wanted to magnify the exquisite quality of authentic qin playing by requesting the soloist to interpret *Youlan* as naturally as possible. Meanwhile, for the string quartet parts, I wanted the materials to

be derived entirely from the original qin melody, and as objectively and non-intrusively as possible. I drew this idea from the art of framing paintings, where the colour, dimension and decorations are carefully considered in order to achieve ‘historical accuracy’ as well as to ‘strike a balance between “contrast and harmony”’ (Satran, 2012). In other words, *Jieshi* was set out to be a composition-as-observation.

Once this idea was cemented, I started thinking about the ways of generating materials for the string quartet. Qin, originally a ‘ritual instrument’, later became a ‘personal, intimate instrument because of its limited volume and intricate sound quality’ (Chen, 1990: 17-18). With that in mind, the choice of deploying Western string instruments and in particular a string quartet, muted throughout, seemed a natural solution to my problem. Before I started work on the project, I was given a transcription – in Western notations – of *Youlan* by qin master Li Xiangting from Beijing, soloist in the first performance (Figure 12). A commercial recording of the work played by him was also made available to me (Ocora C 560001, 1990).

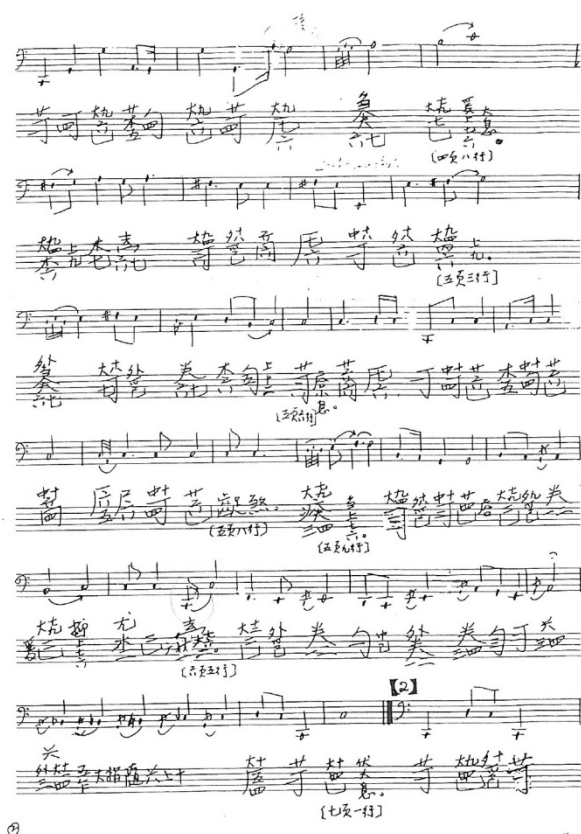


Figure 12 Facsimile of transcription of *Youlan* by Master Li Xiangting.

As one can see in Master Li’s transcription, the melody is notated in Western music fashion, with invented symbols (made up of re-combined fragmented Chinese characters) codifying fingering techniques places below individual note.

All authentic qin music is improvisatory in nature⁵, and *Youlan* is no exception. A quick glance of Master Li's transcription would present a false impression as the appearance of Western notation implies a degree of accuracy in duration proportion, for example, crotchet is equal two quavers, etc. It was therefore essential for me to remind myself that the original 'manuscript' was written in Chinese characters, or ideograms (Figure 13). These ideograms describe the finger positions, fingering technique, character of the sound, and duration in often 'poetic and mystic metaphors', with 'great emphasis placed on the production and control of tone, which often involves an elaborated vocabulary of articulations, modification in timbre, inflections in pitch, fluctuation in intensity, vibratos and tremolos' (Chou, 1971: 215-216). Nothing was absolute, and yet everything is carefully detailed.



Figure 13 Manuscript of *Youlan*, written during the early Tang Dynasty, circa seventh-century, found in Kyoto. (Japan National Museum, Ueno).⁶

⁵ This cannot be more appropriately demonstrated than the fact that Master Li decided only to play movements I, II and IV in the first performance, as heard on the recording.

⁶ The complete *Jieshi diao Youlan* can be viewed at e-Museum: National Treasures & Important Cultural Properties of National Museums, Japan:

http://www.emuseum.jp/detail/100229/000/000?mode=simple&d_lang=en&s_lang=en&word=Youlan&class=&title=&c_e=®ion=&era=¢ury=&cptype=&owner=&pos=1&num=1
[Accessed 19th March, 2013]

Fascinated by the unique sound of the qin, I carried out a spectral analysis on Master Li's recording *Youlan* using the programme SPEAR⁷ in order to get a better picture of the harmonic composites of the sound made by this instrument. Through this exercise, it was discovered that sound of the qin is rich in upper harmonics, as seen in the spectrogram:

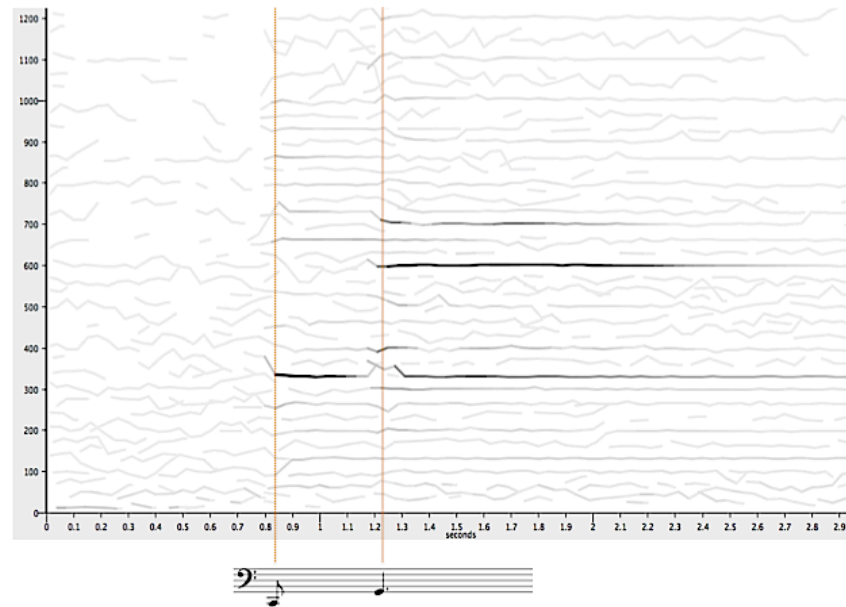


Figure 14 Spectrogram of SPEAR analysis of the first two distinctive notes of *Youlan*

This rich palette of upper harmonics, not particularly noticeable when heard by the naked ear, provided me with a repertoire of pitch materials, or ‘harmonic stack’, for the string quartet (Figure 15). With the modal nature of *Youlan*, a limited set of notes is repeatedly played. Over time, a virtual harmonic background (or drone, referring to Maceda’s concept of the essence of Asian music, see Section 4.2) is created with an emphasis on certain pitches. Using the string quartet to sustain these pitches as well as their associated upper harmonics seemed a logical metaphor of amplifying the original qin melody.

⁷ SPEAR, or Sinusoidal Partial Editing Analysis and Resynthesis, is a software designed by the American composer Michael Klingbeil, which can be used for spectral analysis on recordings. It can be downloaded for free at: <http://www.klingbeil.com/spear/> [Accessed 28th April 2013].

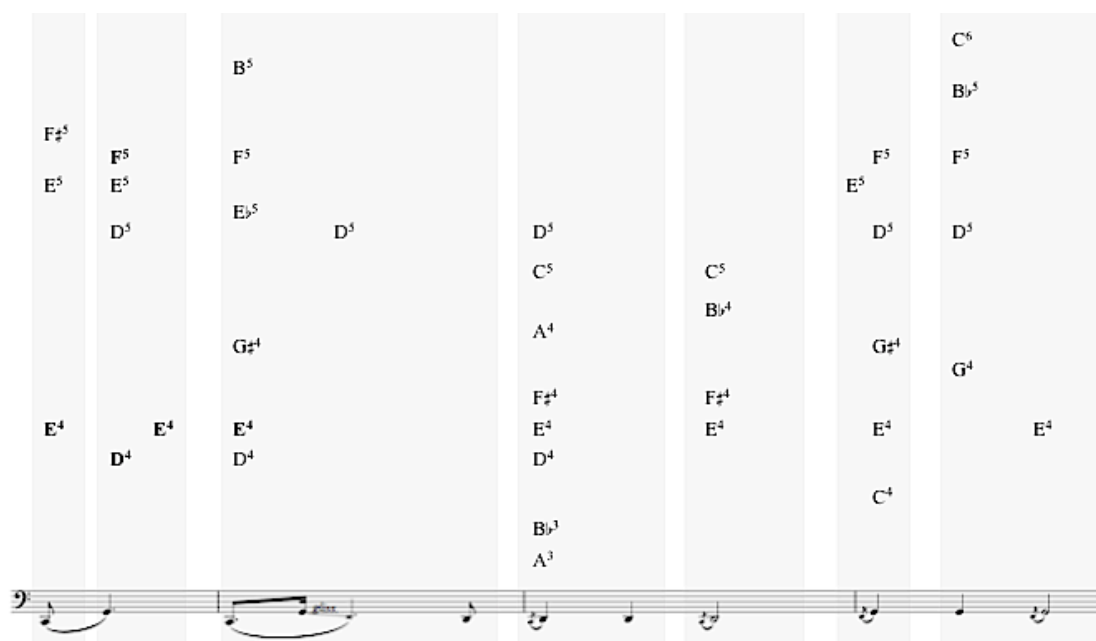


Figure 15 *Youlan* – Frequencies obtained from spectral analysis in relation to the original.

The decision of retaining the improvisatory character of *Youlan* in *Jieshi* prompted an interesting challenge in notation. As one can see in the original of Master Li's transcription, the music is notated in Western notation. Although the use of bar lines can be observed, Master Li explained that the music is not supposed to be played with any sense of meter. Therefore this transcription is to be interpreted as a guideline for improvisation. At best, the qin player would play all the notes written out, with a large degree of flexibility and liberty regarding the durations of the notes – all at the discretion of the performer. To facilitate this notion of freedom and elasticity of the music, an unorthodox system of notation was required to co-ordinate the solo qin with the four Western string players. Based on the principle that the qin player is the leader – a conductor of a sort, and the string quartet follows, or more appropriately, 'comments' on the music played by the qin player. The four string parts are for most of the time tied in with the qin part and operate independently from each other:

Figure 16 is a musical score for a string quartet, labeled 'Jieshi'. It shows four staves: Q. (Quint), Vln. I (Violin I), Vln. II (Violin II), Vla. (Viola), and Vc. (Violoncello). The score is marked with rehearsal mark F. Various performance instructions are included, such as 'cue from vln. II, synchronise with vlc.', 'molto sul pont.', 'ord.', 'mf', 'pp', 'jeté', 'sul IV', 'sul III', and 'sul III ()'.

Figure 16 *Jieshi* – four string players operating independently (rehearsal mark F).

But there are also moments when the string players have to synchronise with one another other to create more unified sonic texture:

Figure 17 is a musical score for a string quartet, labeled 'Jieshi'. It shows four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The score is marked with rehearsal mark N. Various performance instructions are included, such as 'synchronise (tutti)', '(cue to others)', '(led by vln. I)', and 'sf pp'.

Figure 17 *Jieshi* – four string players operating in synchronisation (before rehearsal mark N)

Another aspect of the materials derived for the string quartet is the way the players mimic the playing gestures of the qin (Figure 18). One of the most extraordinary features of qin playing is the repertoire of fingering techniques –

different in each hand – associated with it. In qin manuals such as *Shen Ch'i Pi P'u* (1425, edited by Chu Ch'üan) and *San Ts'ai T'u Hui* (1607/09, edited by Wang Ch'i), there are numerous fingering techniques listed, concerning the a wide range of techniques such as single or double notes, type of slide, pitch deviations, angle, types of attack, etc (Chou, 1971: 215, 223; Kouwenhoven; 2001: 45-47; Liang, 1972; Yu and Hu, 2011: 25-29). To gain an in-depth understanding of these techniques takes years of study and practice, and therefore is outside the scope of this research project. The most sensible solution available to me at this early stage of understanding qin music was to relate all the materials for the string quartet as closely to the original qin melody without any unjustifiable creative imposition⁸.



Figure 18 *Jieshi* – example of string mimicking solo qin gesture (before rehearsal mark C)

In *Jieshi*, the use of Western string instruments are taken out of their normal cultural context; here, they function purely as sound generators capable of producing

⁸ The notion of justifiability is entirely personal. As a creative artist, it is essential for me to find a *raison d'être* for each work that I create, and to identify the suitable materials in the making of it. The choice of materials and their treatment is often informed by a combination of historical, cultural, dramatic and aesthetic context. I saw *Youlan* as a cultural artefact, which in my mind, demanded a non-destructive treatment from the start. It was a decision influenced by my respect and curiosity for a field of knowledge which I am still to explore further, and yet, feel comfortable enough to engage with in a non-deconstructive way.

quiet sustained pitches. Their ‘emotional quality’, i.e. the use of vibrato, often associated with Western music, especially in Classical and Romantic repertoires is avoided. With the unusual notational scheme and concept, the performers are required to listen more intensely than they usually do in metered Western music.

The other issue I faced when working on *Jieshi* was the question of authorship. Even though the concept of ‘composer’ did not exist in Asia until the early part of the twentieth century, (Chou; 2007: 502; Everett, 2004: 8), paradoxically, for a composer such as myself, who grew up in a Westernised Chinese society, the absence of ‘a composer’ for a musical work seemed unorthodox. With that in mind, approaching *Youlan* from a composer-as-observer angle was possibly the most appropriate strategy. Since doing so, I have begun to pay extra attention to my relationship with the materials I have handled in subsequent works.

One final note on the title: *Jieshi* (‘stone tablet’) refers to the ‘mode’ in which *Youlan* was written in, as *Youlan* is also known as *Solitary Orchid in the Stone Tablet Mode*. In a poetic way, *Jieshi* represents a medium such as a stone tablet on which the melody *Youlan* is mounted.

7.4. *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss (2011)*

Instrumentation: 2 violins, viola, violoncello and double bass

Duration: 10’00”

First 15th August 2011 by Nouvel Enemble Moderne, conducted by Lorraine

Performance: Vaillancourt in Salle François-Bernier, Le Domaine Forget, Canada.

After examining the English and Chinese strands of my ‘imagined’ tradition, my attention turned to the strongest single source of influence on my compositional philosophy in my ‘giant web’ model, Lukas Foss.

My examination takes the form of a musical tribute, as well as a study in musical memories, scored for string quintet. The starting point of *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* is Foss’ *Solo* (1981) for solo piano. As mentioned in Section 5, one of the most useful concepts I find in Foss’ music is his strategy of combining musical materials with unexpected compositional technique(s) to create surprising results. In that respect, *Solo* is a prime example. It is a fascinating study in combining serialism and minimalism. The principle tone row (Figure 19) is subjected to numerous repetitions, transformations and reconfigurations with an overall sense of

obsessiveness commonly observed in early minimalist music.



Figure 19 Tone row used in Lukas Foss' *Solo* (1981)

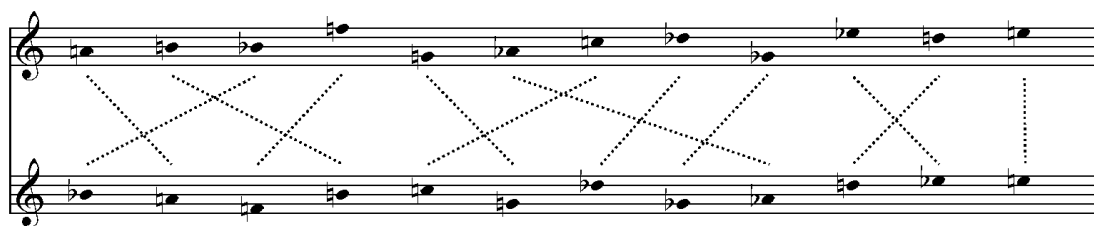
Throughout Foss' life as a composer, various other composers' works made appearances in his own compositions, a practice I have followed in many of my own works. Sometimes these borrowed materials are employed in the more traditional sense, for example, in *Salomon Rossi Suite* (1975) and *Renaissance Concerto* (1985). However, more often these quotations appear as 'distorted memories', such as J. S. Bach's Keyboard Concerto in D Minor (BWV1052) in his *Non-Improvisation* (1964), the same composer's *Sarabande* (from the *Fifth Unaccompanied Cello Suite*) in the final movement of his *Cello Concert* (1966), and most notably the 'deconstruction' of music by Handel, Scarlatti and Bach in *Baroque Variations*. The notion of using quotations as a metaphor of 'memories' is explored in *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss*. All the quotations appearing in the work (except Foss' *Solo*) are:

Quotations	Appearance	Reason of Use
Lukas Foss – <i>For Tōru</i> (1996)	Bars 269-272, 277, 280-281, 284-285	Written in memory of Tōru Takemitsu, also scored for string quintet
J. S. Bach – first movement from Keyboard Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052	Bars 182-187, 362-365	A work Foss often performed, as well as being used in his <i>Non-Improvisation</i> (1964).
J. S. Bach – Prelude from Partita in E Major for solo violin, BWV 1106	Bars 223-224	Used in the third movement of Foss' <i>Baroque Variations</i>
Domenico Scarlatti – Sonata in E Major, K. 380	Bars 183-185	Used in the second movement of Foss' <i>Baroque Variations</i>
Alban Berg – third movement <i>Allegro Misterioso</i> from <i>Lyrische Suite</i> (1925-26)	Bars 174-179, 190-199	Similar to tone row used in Foss' <i>Solo</i>

Table 4 Quotations appearing in *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss*.

The strategy of *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* is in essence a musical wordplay. The work opens with the two sustained pitches of A and F, signifying the initials of Lukas Foss in a form of a 'musical stele':

Lukas Foss' *Solo* (1981)



Movement III *Allegro Misterioso* of
Alban Berg's *Lyrische Suite* (1925-26)

Figure 21 Tone row used in Movement III *Allegro Misterioso* of Berg's *Lyrische Suite*, compared to tone row in Foss' *Solo*.

The slipping from Foss' tone row into Berg's can be achieved as the result of the continuous rotation of the former tone row. The coincidental proximity creates an opportunity for dramatic situation representing the act of 'misremembering'. The main idea behind *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* is the act of remembering, building music out of my memories of Lukas Foss and his music. Therefore it is not unreasonable to incorporate the idea of the 'wrong' memories being mixed into the work during the compositional process, given the materials share a high degree of similarity. 'A musical idea is a surprise that makes sense'⁹, as Foss once told me. The appearance of the *Lyrische Suite* fragment therefore fulfils Foss' idea of a musical idea. When I first met Lukas Foss, I had no formal musical training. He was a mentor to me. Therefore, his sayings and ideas are imprinted into my mind; over time they firmly became a part of my heritage.

Other than the tone row from Foss' *Solo* being used as the building block of the work, two other direct references to Foss' music are made in *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss*. First, chorale-like fragments from his *For Tōru* (1996), written in memory of Tōru Takemitsu, appeared between bars 269-285. As the original was a musical memorial from one composer to another, the element of 'remembering' of the work is being made even more poignant with this convolution of references. In the middle of the third movement of *Baroque Variations*, *Phorion*, Foss requested the percussionist to hammer out 'Johann Sebastian Bach' in Morse code. In a similar playful spirit, before the aforementioned appearance of fragments from *For Tōru*, the

⁹ When I first met Lukas Foss in London in June 1998, I had many conversations with him regarding composition over the course of four days. One of the questions I asked was his concept of musical ideas. This was his answer. Due to the starkness of the answer, it has stayed in my mind ever since. No recording of these interviews survives.

ensemble gently tapped out ‘Lukas Foss’ in Morse code as a knowing nod to Foss’ radical and yet loving tribute to a composer who played such an important role in his life.

N

Meno mosso, movimento meccanico (♩ = 100)

Figure 22 ‘Lukas Foss’ in Morse code, *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* (bars 257-260).

For the last section (bars 306-361) of *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss*, the pentatonic mode rotation as used in *Northwest Wind* is once again employed. This time, however, the modes are used as sieves to filter out notes in Foss’ *Solo* tone row:

Lukas Foss' *Solo* - complete tone row

Lukas Foss' *Solo* tone row filtered by pentatonic C-Mode

Lukas Foss' *Solo* tone row filtered by pentatonic G-Mode

Lukas Foss' *Solo* tone row filtered by pentatonic D-Mode

Figure 23 Lukas Foss’ *Solo* tone row filtered by pentatonic C, G and D mode respectively.

By retaining the temporal profile of each ‘filtered’ mode, they are then superimposed to create a comparatively transparent, modally orientated last section before Bach’s Keyboard Concerto in D Minor makes one final brief appearance between bars 362-363.

While the continuity in *Jieshi* is sustained by the preservation of the original qin

melody *Youlan*, in *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss*, the sense of continuity is maintained by the concept of stream-of-consciousness. This is sustained by a long thread of notes generated by the endless mutation of a tone row with fragments of pre-existing music representing memories of Lukas Foss and his music emerging onto the surface. Such structure does not follow any predefined pattern; it springs from the concept of the work and the demand of its materials. The structural aspect of *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* has its originality, and yet, with the tone-row mutation modelled on Foss' *Solo*, it exemplifies the notion of 're-invention' of a musical heritage unique to me. This stream-of-consciousness style of structuring a composition will be 're-invented' in *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*.

7.5. *Les Etoiles au Front* (2012)

Instrumentation:	clarinet (doubling bass clarinet), accordion, violin, viola and violoncello
Duration:	15'00"
First Performance:	20 th February 2012, by Stuart King (clarinet), Ian Watson (accordion) and members of the CHROMA Ensemble – Marcus Barcham-Stevens (violin), David Aspin (viola) and Clare O'Connell (cello) – at Kings Place, London.
Notes:	<i>Les Etoiles au Front</i> was commissioned by CHROMA Ensemble to celebrate its 15th anniversary. It was shortlisted for the chamber category of the BASCA British Composer Awards 2012.

All the works discussed so far have their structures governed by the materials used or the necessary developments demanded by these materials. The semi-automatic note generation process using the 'augmented pentatonic-window' in *Northwest Wind*, the quintessential English song cycle structure of *Dead Letters*, the structure of *Jieshi* inherited from the qin melody and the underlying proliferation of tone-row manipulation mixed with a stream of consciousness in *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* are all examples. Moreover, each of these works focuses on one particular strand in my imagined tradition. In the next work, my motivation is to explore my fascination with commonalities between different cultures. I also wanted to see how a musical heritage might be re-imagined by synthesising the influence of two key texts, one each from a different cultural context. It is one of my own takes on universalism.

The title of this double concerto for clarinet, accordion and string trio paraphrases the 1925 play *L'étoile au front* by the French surrealist writer Raymond Roussel (1877-1933), whose writing was an influence in my early works. It comprises

of ten interlocking episodes and scored in a variety of instrumental combinations. Instead of using a logical thread running through the quotations appearing in the piece, the criteria for choosing existing materials for *Les Etoiles au Front* based solely on the image of ‘star’:

Movement	Instrumentation	Quotation(s)
I	Clarinet solo	Prélude du 1er Acte <i>La Vocation</i> from Satie’s <i>Le fils de étoiles</i> (1891)
II	Accordion and string trio	Reynaldo Hahn’s <i>Les étoiles</i> (from <i>Douze rondels</i>) (1899)
III	Bass clarinet and accordion	<i>Appel Interstellaire</i> from Olivier Messiaen’s <i>Des canyons aux étoiles...</i> (1971-74)
IV	String Trio	An untitled melody printed in Raymond Roussel’s <i>Locus Solus</i> (1914), Chapter 6 (Roussel, 2008: 183)
V	Accordion and string trio	Satie’s <i>La Vocation</i>
VI	Clarinet, viola and violoncello, later joined by violin and viola	-
VII	Violin and viola	-
VIII	Clarinet, accordion and string trio	Nie Er’s (1912-35) <i>March of the Volunteers</i> (1934), which later became the anthem of the People’s Republic of China
IX	Bass clarinet, accordion and string trio	-
X	Clarinet, accordion and string trio	Satie’s <i>La Vocation</i>

Table 5 The instrumental line-up and quotations in *Les Etoiles au Front*.

The structural concept of this double concerto, on the other hand, is inspired by two literary works of very different historical and cultural contexts. These are the insertion of fifty-nine ‘mundane’ (Roussel, 2011: 13) illustrations by Henri-A. Zo in the highly convoluted ‘cantos’ of Roussel’s *Nouvelles Impressions d’Afrique* (*New Impressions of Africa*, 1932), and the extraordinary supernatural stories collectively known as *Strange Tales From a Chinese Studio* (first published posthumously in 1740) by the late-Ming/early-Qing Dynasty Chinese writer Pu Songling (1640-1715). Each story in this collection of supernatural tales varies in length as much as form, subject matter and narrative discourse.

Roussel's work has been a fascination of mine for over a decade; his unique and idiosyncratic way of writing using 'procédé' (Roussel, 1996; Ford, 2000: 1-26) has been a source of inspiration in the past. Meanwhile, I have known some of the stories from *Strange Tales From a Chinese Studio* since I was very young, and have been fascinated by their quirkiness. It was Pu Songling's ability to 'invisibly weave a world as unstable as water and as changing and marvellous as the clouds' (Borges, 1999: 508) from ordinary elements that intrigued me.¹⁰ It is their strangeness – both in the content and narrative discourse – which gave me the initial idea of constructing a work made up of short (and seemingly unrelated) movements, as if it were a collection of holiday postcard from make-believe places in sound. Absurdity is a fascination shared by the two writers, one from the East and one from the West; it is also the main motto behind this double concerto.

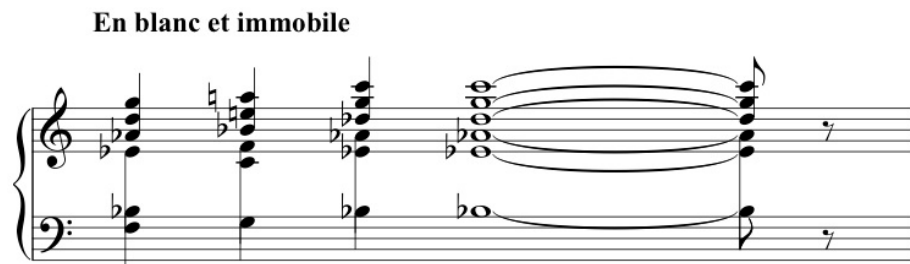


Figure 24 Opening of Satie's *Prélude du 1er Acte (La Vocation)* from *Le fils de étoiles* (1891).

Les Etoiles au Front has a strong element of theatre in its conception. It was conceived as a 'drama without words' in ten scenes, in which the five instruments play different 'roles'. Some of the 'scenes' share materials, for example, Satie's *La Vocation* (Figure 24) in Movement I, V and X, while some of them are completely independent and have no thematic relationship with any other scene in the work. For example, Movement III – which use a melody found in Roussel's *Locus Solus* (Roussel, 2008: 183) (Figure 25) – and movement IV are completely independent from the rest of the movements (and from each other too). Materials are never shared between adjacent movements.

¹⁰ On a more subconscious level, my attraction to the stories in *Strange Tales From a Chinese Studio* is because of, as Judith T. Zeitlin suggests, Pu Songling's intention of 'constructing a literary tradition and placing himself within it.' (Zeitlin, 1993: 45).

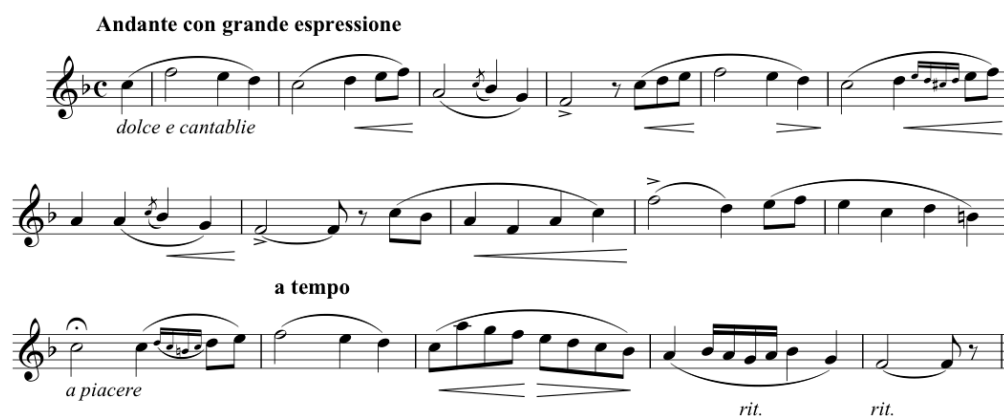


Figure 25 Unnamed melody in Chapter 6 of Raymond Roussel's *Locus Solus*.

One of the more distinctive features of *Les Etoiles au Front* is the way the movements are joined. As in a stage play, there are entrances and exits, both for the music and the 'characters' (i.e. players). The various types of transition between movements initially conceived in film making terms, namely blackout, cutaway and fading. Some of 'scenes' are separated by brief breaks (between II and III, IV and V, VII and VIII, IX and X), while some of them are played *attacca* (I and II, III and IV, VIII and IX) or overlapping each other (V and VI, VI and VII). The formality of Western art music was replaced by a different consideration of musical continuity (and discontinuity) inspired by structural techniques used in stage plays and films. This structural strategy is the fruit of distilling the structural essences of the two literary works that inspire it.

With the undertone of Sino-French bipolarity of the work, all the 'star'-related quotations used in *Les Etoiles au Front* have their origins rooted in one (or sometimes both) of these two countries. For example, Satie's *La Vocation* from *Le fils de étoiles* was chosen for its implied pentatonicism melodically – and hence a suggested a link between the two cultural worlds (Figure 24). All materials used can fundamentally be explained by the straightforward 'star' criteria, with the exception of Nie Er's (1912-35) *March of the Volunteers* (1935). After seeing a poster used during the Cultural Revolution, which show Chairman Mao wearing a cap with a big star on the forehead, visually echoing the title of the work (Cushing and Tompkins, 2007: 99) (Figure 26). This song started life in the movie *Children of the Storm*, *Tieti xia de genū* ('*The Sing-Song Girl Under the Iron Hoof*') (1935); it eventually became the national anthem of the People's Republic of China (Jones, 2001: 124-125). As I grew up in Hong Kong when it was still a British colony, my patriotic feeling for Mainland China has always

been comparatively faint – especially since I learnt the horror of the Cultural Revolution when I was young. With the events of June 1989, my remaining positive political feelings for that country vanished. In some ways, *Northwest Wind* was written as a lament in disguise, while Movement VIII of *Les Etoiles au Front* is a satire about the ideological-political-economic paradox in China.



Figure 26 *The Red Sun is In Our Heart* – handmade print by Beijing Language Institute student Li Jianping in 1967. Taken from *Chinese Posters: Arts from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, pp. 99. Copyright Chronicle Books, 2007.

The movement starts with a march-like passage, which is in fact a fast rendition of Satie's *La Vocation*, melodically identical to the beginning of Movement I. The music then turns lyrical before it melts into a distorted waltz-cum-circus-music style of the *March of the Volunteers* (Figure 27). This bizarre leap of musical style makes a direct gestural reference to a work by one of the composers discussed in Part II – the strange barrel organ music marked *allegretto, con indifferenza* (bars 699-720) in Bartók's *Fifth String Quartet* (1934). Although as Malcolm Gillies observes that such device is a 'more radical example of Bartók's thematic variation' (Gillies, 1993: 292), it was interpreted personally as a 'surprise that makes sense' (in the words of Lukas Foss) when I first heard the work. Such gestural reference (to Bartók, via Lukas Foss) with the specific (and peculiar) reasons behind it is unique to me. Such conclusion can only be drawn with the combination of my various experiences – hearing the Bartók quartet, my knowledge of Foss' ideas, my knowledge of *March of the Volunteers* and the experience of witnessing the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989 with such proximity. In *Les Etoiles au Front*, such stylistic leap is more for the purpose of subtle satire than mere thematic variation.

[N]

Tempo di valse, l'istesso tempo (♩ = 63, ♩ = ♩) (♩ = ♩)

[N]

Tempo di valse, l'istesso tempo (♩ = 63, ♩ = ♩) (♩ = ♩)

Cl. *mf dolce* *mf p* *f* *f p*

Accord. *mf* *f p* *mf* *mf* *f p* *f p*

Vln. *mp* *f p* *f*

Vla. *ord.* *mp* *f p*

Vc. *pizz. (lv.)* *mf* *f secco* *f p*

Figure 27 *March of the Volunteers* appears as waltz-type circus music in Movement VIII of *Les Etoiles au Front*, bars 44-48.

With the unusual ten-movement form, *Les Etoiles au Front* invites its listeners to think of it as a divertimento rather than a concerto in the traditional Western music sense. After all, the idea of a concerto is a purely Western invention. To my mind, the idea of ‘concerto’ lies in the spirit of a work made to show off the virtuosity and musicianship of the performers. The structure and shape of the work being inspired by the combination of two distinctive writers from two completely different countries and eras indicated an unconscious tendency on my part to find the commonalities between Eastern and Western cultures (or different cultures in general), but without the parameters restricted to purely musical ones. My eclectic attitude towards composing, as the five works discussed so far have shown, is possibly one of the strongest traits in the tradition that I have invented for myself. This eclecticism will be stretched to the extreme in the final work of this research.

7.6. *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* (2012)

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubling cor anglais), 3 clarinets (2nd doubling Eb clarinet, 3rd doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 1 contra-bassoon (doubling bassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, flugelhorn, 3 trombones, tuba, 3 percussions, harp, timpani, strings (14,12,10,8,6)

Duration: 15’00’’

First 18th January 2013, BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Long Yu, at

Performance: Barbican Hall, London.

Moving gradually from the mono-cultural reference *Northwest Wind*, *Dead Letters* and *Jieshi* to the culturally eclectic backdrops of *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* and *Les Etoiles au Front*, each of these works has its own sound world and musical syntax. Nonetheless, they all come from the same ‘re-invented’ heritage constituting traditions – with the degree of influence of each tradition taken into account – I consider (or imagine) to be influential to me.

In theory, the number of possible ideas that a composer can draw from this ‘re-invented’ heritage is countless, particularly for composers who have a more cosmopolitan background, as I do. Left with such foreboding freedom, it is the composer’s responsibility to find the *raison d’être* of the work, the right materials, and the appropriate treatment of the materials according to the composer’s relationship with the materials – as exemplified in the case of *Jieshi*. For the final piece of the research, I wanted to embrace all the ideas that I have explored in the other pieces as well as to investigate new ideas – universalism, inclusiveness and stylistic stability in the context of re-invented heritage.

Since both Chou Wen-chung and José Maceda voiced strong ideas about universalism in music from all over the world, particularly between Western and Eastern music, it was hardly surprising for them to show interest in the music by Western composers who held similar views, such as Varèse (Chang, 2001; Chou, 1966; Varèse and Chou, 1966) and Xenakis (Maceda, 1979; Maceda, 1981). Their fascination with Varèse’s idea of ‘art science’¹¹ is of particular importance to the development of both composers. It is also from Varèse’s analogy of music with crystallisation that I drew the inspiration for the structure of *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*:

¹¹ Varèse took inspiration from science, and had based several of his writings (Varèse and Chou, 1966) and lectures on books dealing with scientific topics. At Santa Fe in 1936, Varèse quoted from the book *Music, a Science and an Art* by a former lecturer in acoustics at Columbia University, John Redfield. In 1939, at the University of Southern California, Varèse once again paraphrased the title of Redfield’s book in the title of his own lecture *Music as an Art Science*. See John D. Anderson’s *Varèse and the Lyricism of the New Physics* (Anderson, 1991) for more details.

Conceiving musical form as a resultant – the result of a process, I was struck by what seemed to me an analogy between the formation of my compositions and the phenomenon of crystallization.

(Varèse and Chou, 1966: 16)

It was through the words of one of his contemporaries, Nathaniel Arbiter (1911-2008), a professor of mineralogy at Columbia University that Varèse made his musical ideas in an analogy to crystallisation:

The crystal is characterized by both a definite external form and a definite internal structure. The internal structure is based on the unit of crystal which is the smallest grouping of the atoms that has the order and composition of the substance. The extension of the unit into space form the whole crystal. But in spite of the relatively limited variety of internal structures, the external forms of crystals are limitless. ... Crystal form itself is a resultant rather than a primary attribute.

(Varèse and Chou 1966: 16)

Science, or scientific truth, does not usually come with the baggage of cultural differentiation and history. Therefore, it is not hard to see the attraction the notion of drawing inspiration for musical composition from scientific observations has for Asian composers such as Maceda and Chou, who strived for universalism in their music. As Varèse's crystallisation metaphor suggests, the resultant structure of a work cannot be pre-determined. The totality of the end product is depending on the organic interaction of its various components; it is not determined by any cultural pre-occupation, and it cannot be predicted. This objective structure metaphor proved to be very useful for the purpose of re-inventing musical heritage in the context of this research.

Similar organic approaches to form were employed in two other single-movement works in this research, namely *Northwest Wind* and *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* where there were mechanisms operating behind the scene, governing the harmonic process, i.e. the 'augmented pentatonic-window' and the 'tone-row manipulation' respectively. This concept of 'form as a resultant of a process' introduced a much higher degree of freedom in the construction of *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*.

My home for over two decades was the starting idea of my new work. For the title, I turned to the eighteenth-century Scottish-born bookseller and proof-reader

Alexander Cruden (1699-1770). Cruden is now chiefly remembered as the author who single-handedly completed the first concordance to the English Bible, as well as for his eccentricities. On several occasions, he became unhinged as a result of his dealings with women, and was subjected to more than one period of incarceration in asylums. After the second of such misadventures in 1738, he protested against the cruel treatment he had received in a pamphlet titled *The London citizen exceedingly injured* (Keay, 2001: 164-172).

Unlike *Dead Letters*, where the life of Gerard Manley Hopkins was used as the storyboard of the work, *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* has little else to do with the life of Alexander Cruden, other than the title itself and the notion of ‘references’ borrowed from Cruden’s concordance. The idea of referencing is an underpinning nature of traditions, and it is also a running feature in the works discussed so far. But in *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*, it becomes the very fabric of the piece. Subtitled a ‘symphonic game’ (for its playful nature and unpredictability), the basic concept is to construct an imagined aural landscape constructed from my memories and impressions of London, mixed with debris of existing London-related musical works.

H A W K E S P O C K E T S C O R E S

The two motifs, a and b, comprised in Ex. 1, are thereupon individually expanded through eleven bars, to culminate in a restatement of Exs. 1 and 2 (2). This section is said to represent the cheerful animation of the London streets. It is followed by a subject of more serious allure, “nobilmente”, generally known as the “citizen” theme (3) and associated with the calm confidence of the great city and its inhabitants.

Los motivos “a” y “b” del ej. 1 se expanden individualmente por once compases para culminar en una reafirmación de los ej. 1 y 2 (2). Se dice que esta sección representa el alegre bullicio de las calles de Londres. Viene seguida de un tema de porte más serio, “nobilmente”, conocido, generalmente como el “tema del ciudadano” (3) y asociado con el ánimo tranquilo y seguro de la ciudad y de sus habitantes.



Figure 28 Insert found in an old Boosey & Hawkes edition of Elgar’s *Cockaigne* pocket score.

As I discovered from an old Boosey & Hawkes edition (Figure 28) of Edward Elgar’s (1857-1934) *Cockaigne (In London Town)* Op. 40 (1901), the *nobilmente* melody first appearing at rehearsal mark 9 (Figure 29) was once known as the ‘citizen’ theme – a fact I did not know before the undertaking of this project, even though I was familiar with and loved the work. When I made this discovery, my chosen title suddenly took on a new meaning – as well as the poetic value of such an

intriguing title, it could also be interpreted as a compositional process, i.e. take apart the ‘citizen’ theme beyond recognition. This image propelled me to develop the shape and sound of the orchestral work.



Figure 29 ‘Citizen’ theme from Edward Elgar’s *Cockaigne (In London Town)* Op. 40 (1901)

Instead of using the *nobilmente* melody unaltered, I decided to explore the melodic potential of it by applying very basic serial procedures to it, namely the process of inversion, retrograde and the combination of both. Eventually, I decided to use the opening three-notes from the ‘inversion’ form as the main building block of the work:

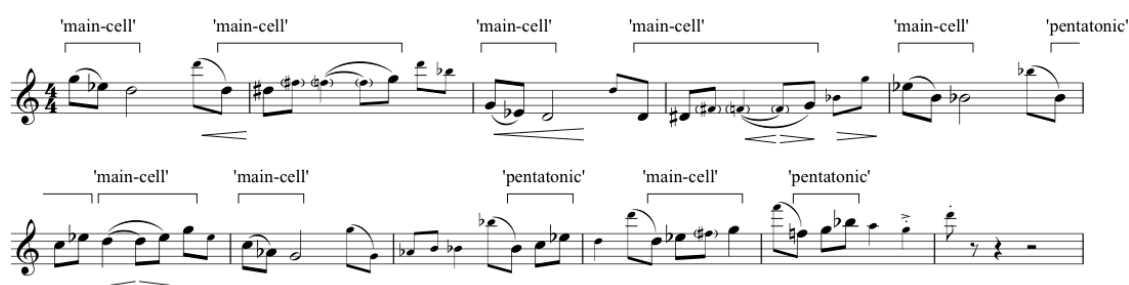


Figure 30 ‘Inversion’ of Elgar’s ‘citizen’ theme – the ‘main cell’ formed by the first three notes is used as a basic building block for the work. The ‘pentatonic’ fragments inspire the ‘Chinese’ episode starting at rehearsal mark Y.

Another example of using fragments from the Elgar's theme to construct melodic ideas for the work can be found in the 'retrograde' of the theme:

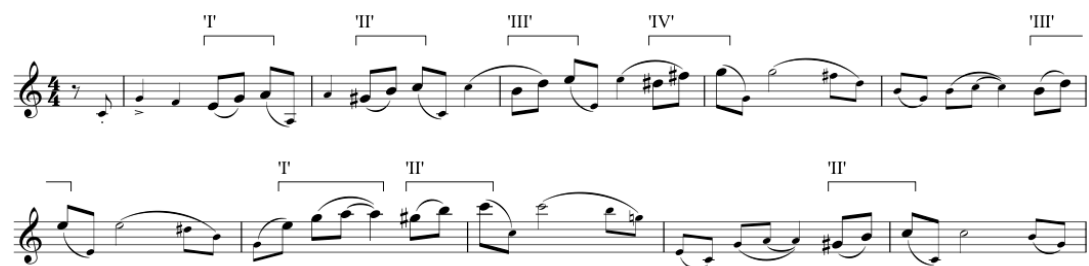


Figure 31 'Retrograde' of Elgar's 'citizen' theme

Out of this version, four three-note fragments are extracted and stitched together to form a longer, twelve-note ascending melodic idea:



Figure 32 Twelve-note melodic phrase built out of the four segments extracted from 'retrograde' of Elgar's 'citizen' theme

This fragment in turn forms the basic material for the music between rehearsal mark Q and R:

24 **Allegro scorrevole, l'istesso tempo (♩ = c. 104)**

Figure 33 The twelve-note melodic idea proliferates itself in the woodwind, brass and percussion between rehearsal marks Q and R.

The decision in using this three-note figure as the basic building block of the work was partly influenced by my idea of using a second ‘main theme’ for the work. In George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), the nursery rhyme *Oranges and Lemons* was used as a narrative device, representing collective memories of the old London before the regime took over:

It was curious, but when you said it to yourself you had the illusion of actually hearing bells, the bells of a lost London that still existed somewhere or other, disguised and forgotten. From one ghostly steeple after another he seemed to hear them pealing forth. Yet so far as he could remember he had never in real life heard church bells ringing.

(Orwell, 1949: 114)

Oranges and Lemons (Figure 34) catalogues the bells of various London

churches. Its share of strong major third (i.e. tonic-mediant) property with the three-note cell chosen from the Elgar theme led me to consider it to as a ‘second subject’. As a matter of fact, the major third plays an important role in bringing up all the other London-themed quotations (Table 6).



Figure 34 *Oranges and Lemons*, as transcribed from chiming of the bells at St. Clement Danes, London.

Quotations/Allusion	Reason of Use
John Ireland's <i>A London Overture</i> (1936), The four-notes figure at the beginning of <i>Allegro</i> (after rehearsal mark 5).	<i>'It has been stated that the first four notes of the principle theme (Allegro) were based on the word 'Piccadilly' as called out by a bus conductor.'</i> (Ireland, 2001: 421)
Ralph Vaughan Williams' <i>Symphony No. 2</i> , <i>A London Symphony</i> (1913) – six-note figure first appearing in fourth bars after rehearsal mark D, first movement.	The major-third contained within this fragment compliment with the three-note fragment taken from the inversed Elgar's 'citizen' theme.
Haydn <i>Symphony No. 98</i> , Hob. I: 98 (1792), second movement, opening 4 bars.	Melodically and harmonically suggests <i>God Save the King/Queen</i> .
<i>Heil dir im Siegerkranz</i> from Carl Maria von Weber's <i>Jubel-Ouverture</i> for orchestra in E major, J. 245 (Op. 59, 1818).	<i>Heil dir im Siegerkranz</i> (<i>Hail to Thee in Victor's Crown</i>) - <i>God Save the King/Queen</i> , was adopted by the German Empire as its anthem; Weber's overture was written for the jubilee of Frederick Augustus I of Saxony (Scholes, 1954: 231).
Raymond Yiu's <i>Tubae Fori</i> (2010) for brass quintet.	Commission by the Worshipful Company of Marketors for its Royal Charter on 19 th October 2010.
Allusion to the opening drum flourish to the theme tune of BBC television soap opera <i>EastEnders</i> (1985), composed by Simon May and Leslie Osborne	According to a poll carried out by PRS in 2008, the <i>EastEnders</i> theme more recognisable than <i>God Save the Queen</i> (Irvine, 2008).
The introduction to Elgar's <i>Pomp and Circumstances</i> No. 1 (1901).	Written shortly after <i>Cockaigne</i> ; the two works share stylistic similarity, ideal to be used as a 'mis-quotation'.

The chimes of the great bells in the Elizabeth Tower, Palace of Westminster in London, commonly known as the ‘Big Ben’.	The chime has a symbolic significance for London.
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Table 6 London related quotations appearing in *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*.



Figure 35 Fragment from John Ireland's *A London Overture* (1937), opening of *Allegro*.



Figure 36 Fragment from Ralph Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony* (1913), figure at fourth bar after D in the First Movement

In the spirit of Varèse's analogy of crystallisation to musical form, melodic fragments were gradually constructed from the cut-up versions of the Elgar 'citizen' theme, with an emphasis on the three-note cell. These were mixed with fragments of *Oranges and Lemons* to proliferate into a long 'melodic backbone' (Figure 37), on which all the London-themed quotations (and their fragmented forms) were added bit by bit. As a result, despite the often deceptively rich texture of the work, *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* is monodic in principle, as some of the passages have shown. For example, in the opening section, where the active pitch-set spreads from the initial single B⁴ (where the solo flugelhorn returns to at the end of the work, bar the very last note) to an explosion of pitches by around rehearsal mark B. Similarly between bars 204-219 the music is gradually drawn to the pitch E – in octave unison initially, and quickly reduced to E⁶ alone.

handling a reasonably large amount of existing musical materials in the most unexpected way. One example of the superimposition of multiple quotations in *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* can be found starting at rehearsal mark N where the focus is on *Heil dir im Siegerkranz*:

N Capriccioso, meno mosso ($\text{♩} = 112$)
 'citizen'-inverse + 'citizen' retrograde
 + 'Oranges and Lemons' + Haydn's No. 98
 + 'Heil dir im Siegerkranz' (might need a few more bars)

161 $\frac{2}{4}$ *ff* *f* *pp* *trp.* *woodblocks* *sfz* *f* *pp* *mp* *f* *ff* *sfz* *secco* *vlc.* *f* *mp* *ff* *mp* *f*

168 (pizz.) $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ *8va 1 loco* *mp* (pizz.) (pizz.)

O

174 $\frac{2}{4}$ (arco)

'Oranges and Lemons' (pizz.)

f

mp \rightarrow *f*

ff

picc.

ob.

cl.

mp \rightarrow *f*

f

mf

p

mp

mf

pp

mf

f

Haydn's No. 98

sfz

sim.

P

181

pp \rightarrow *f* *pp* \rightarrow *f* *pp* \rightarrow *f* *pp* \rightarrow *f* *pp* \rightarrow *f* *p*

sfz *sim.*

mf

tp. I

p \rightarrow *f* *p*

vn. sul IV

p

Figure 38 Superimposition of multiple quotations focusing on *Heil dir im Siegerkranz*, rehearsal marks N and O (particell only).

Oranges and Lemons is not simply used thematically in the normal sense. A recording of St Clement Danes' chiming of *Oranges and Lemons* is used for SPEAR spectral analysis, where a set of 'harmonic stacks' is obtained (Figure 39). These are then used as the harmonic materials for the instrumental synthesis of the 'illusion of bells' as suggested by Orwell (Figure 40). *Oranges and Lemons* is not detected as a

melodic theme in the passage, but nonetheless, the music was still drawn solely from the nursery rhyme. This spectral approach to the musical material – a technique already explored in *Jieshi* – provided a stark juxtaposition in a work otherwise thematically-orientated. Although spectral composition is the creation of composers identified with L’Itineraire in France and Feedback Studios in Germany in the 1970s (Anderson, 2000: 15), its aesthetic concern is remarkably similar to those attributes associated with qin music as highlighted by Chou Wen-chung (see Section 7.3). Therefore, by considering spectral approach as a compositional technique, my interest in the frequency composites of the St Clement Danes’ chiming of *Oranges and Lemons*, rather than the melody itself can be associated back to my distant Chinese heritage.



Figure 39 ‘Harmonic stacks’ obtained from spectral analysis of a recording of the chiming of *Oranges and Lemons* at St Clement Danes, London.

The musical score for 'Oranges and Lemons' bars 256-263 is a complex orchestral arrangement. It features a large ensemble of instruments, including woodwinds, brass, and strings. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (bars 256-263) includes parts for Flutes, Piccolo, Oboes, English Horn, Clarinets, Bassoons, Trumpets, Trombones, Tuba, Timpani, Percussion, and Strings. The second system (bars 264-271) includes parts for Violins I, Violins II, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, dynamics (pp, f, sf, ff), articulation (acc, marcato), and performance instructions (e.g., 'slightly overblown', 'no breath', 'no post'). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. The key signature is one flat (B-flat).

Figure 40 Instrumental synthesis of *Oranges and Lemons*, bars 256-263.

The use of *Heil dir im Siegerkranz* ('Hail, thou in the Victor's Wreath') – known as *God Save the King/Queen* in the United Kingdom – is especially relevant in the context of dealing with identities and traditions. Despite its British origin, when Carl Maria von Weber employed it in his *Jubel Overture* of 1818 for the celebration of the fiftieth year of the reign of King Frederick Augustus I of Saxony (Scholes, 1954: 244), it was used as the anthem of Prussia (Scholes, 1954: 24, 231). When the melody was adopted to some new words after 1870, *Brause, du Freiheitsang!* ('Roar out, thou Freedom's Song!'), a poem for a United Germany, 'led apparently to its becoming looked upon, in some countries outside Germany, as the German national musical symbol' (Scholes, 1954: 185). Its presence here increases the poignancy of identity ambiguity in terms of nationality and the 'location' of this music.

As *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* draws inspiration from my own experiences as a resident of London for the last two decades, it felt it was justifiable to integrate a fragment of my musical memory with a strong London connection into the master synthesis. *Tubae Fori* (2010), scored for brass quintet (Figure 41), was commissioned by the Worshipful Company of Marketors to mark the occasion of its receipt of a royal charter on 19th October 2010. As it was written with the melodic contour of *Oranges and Lemons* in mind, its integration into *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* – at rehearsal mark L (Figure 42) – seems natural.

Fanfare I: two trumpets
Fanfare II: full ensemble
Score in C.

RAYMOND YIU (2010)

Figure 41 *Tubae Fori* (2010).

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system, covering bars 136 to 145, features the following instruments: Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Trombone. The second system, covering bars 146 to 154, includes Horn, Trumpet, Tuba, Tenor, Timpani, Percussion (Maracas), Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is rich with musical notation, including various dynamics such as *f*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, and *ff*, as well as articulation marks like accents and slurs. Performance instructions are also present, such as "best sticks" for the timpani and "mf marcio" for the percussion. The notation includes a variety of note values, rests, and phrasing slurs, indicating a complex and dynamic musical passage.

Figure 42 The appearance of *Tubae Fori* in the brass section in *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*, bars 136-154 (only up to bar 145 is shown here).

In each of the other works in this research, the strands of my ‘imagined’ musical tradition being explored are limited for the purpose achieving a high degree of focus and unity within each piece. *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*, on the other hand, is aiming for the opposite. I wanted to create a rich all-inclusiveness and the notion of saturation as a truer representation of the world where diverse cultures collide, integrate or merely coexist. In doing so, I discovered that as a composer operating within his ‘re-invented’ heritage, special attention should be paid to the type of influence and their proportional magnitude according to their relative positions on the ‘giant web’ model. With the vast, open nature of the ‘giant web’ model, a composer has to be extremely careful to filter out the unnecessary interference. For example, a seemingly bias towards materials drawn from Edwardian (and slightly later) English concert music used in *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* can be explained by my interest and familiarity with that repertoire. An influence can be a source for materials as well as a source of interference, i.e. the problem of the foreboding freedom.

Another element being explored in *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* more than any other pieces in this research was the stability of musical style as a reflection of a composer’s attitude to his/her musical traditions. This was not the first time such attempt was made. In *The Original Chinese Conjuror* (2003-06), quotations, parody and mimicry were the fundamental musical currencies necessary for a stage work dramatising the concept of identity and deception (see Section 1.2). Unlike *Les Etoiles au Front*, the one movement form of *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* heightens the tension created by the coming together of extremely diverse musical materials and principles as a continuous whole, ‘compelling different musical concerns to interact in the moment of composition itself’ (Osmond-Smith, 1985: 1). With the larger number of players available in a symphony orchestra, the possibility to handle more layers of materials with clarity is increased. The choosing of a title based on a work by a deranged person somehow resonates with an observation that the Canadian composer Henry Brant (1913-2008) made in 1950, namely that:

Single-style music, no matter how experimental or full of variety, could no longer evoke the new stresses, layered insanities and multi-directional assaults of contemporary life on the spirit.

(Taruskin 2010: 421)

This idea of ‘layered insanities’ is best displayed between rehearsal mark CC and FF. After its first appearance at rehearsal mark BB as a busy, distorted ‘Chinoiserie’ inclination on the strings, the Elgar ‘citizen’ theme finally makes its appearance, disguised as a foxtrot starting at bar 374 (i.e. one bar before rehearsal figure CC). After it dances away in a carefree way until rehearsal mark DD, a second strand of music – the Elgar ‘citizen’ theme disguised as a Viennese waltz enters while the foxtrot continues. The entry of the first trumpet announcing the opening melody triggers the opening three bars of Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstances March No. 1* (bars 408-410) which then immediately transfigures into a tango gesture – taking its cue from the rhythmic pattern of the *Pomp and Circumstances* introduction (bars 411-415), while the foxtrot-waltz conflict carries on. Fragments of *Heil dir im Siegerkranz*, *Oranges and Lemons*, and even *Cockaigne* itself appear (see the violin I figure between bars 416-418 as a close replica of violin I and flutes at rehearsal mark 3 of the Elgar original). All these quotations and allusions are woven into the texture through their ‘resemblance to other material in the movement, making their presence far from obvious’ (Burkholder, 1987, 20) until all these musics pile on top of each other to the point of full saturation. Then they stop abruptly, leaving an offstage solo flugelhorn singing out a melodic statement constructed from the ‘citizen’ three-note cell and *Oranges and Lemons*. The decision to place this soloist outside the orchestra is both dramatically and symbolically necessary, giving the ‘displaced person’ who has been silent all along to have the last words – with all the cultural and historical debris removed, the true personality is finally left to stand on its own and shine.

8. Conclusion

Free and easy, that's my style.
Howdy-do me, watch me smile.
Fare-thee-well me after a while,
'Cause I gotta roam.
And any place I hang my hat is home.

Johnny Mercer, 1946

There are composers who choose not to pay much attention to musical tradition, while others make it a primary concern in their creative activities. Those who choose to engage with the issue, as discussed in this research, are often bewildered and even baffled by the array of different, sometimes contradictory, interpretations and implications of the term ‘musical tradition’. Without an in-depth understanding of the meaning and boundaries of their musical traditions – as I was, before undertaking this research – composers run the risk of being weighed down by the historical, political, and sometimes even moral baggage that comes with such a complex cultural construct.

As observed, composers’ perception of ‘musical tradition’ is often very different from those held by musicologists and performers. For composers, ‘musical tradition’ is not a mere system for categorising musical practises and artefacts; the notion of a ‘musical tradition’ forms a crucial mental (i.e. imagined) framework for composers to store, grade and codify musical information and memories according to their cultural, geographical and emotional significance. This hierarchical repository of personally codified musical data – or ‘re-invented musical heritage’ – can then be retrieved and applied selectively according to the poetic or technical requirements of each work they compose. The compositions therefore, are informed by the specific boundaries of tradition as perceived by the creator. From composers’ point of view, musical tradition is a product of imagination; its definitions and boundaries fluctuate according to the creative need of the composer.

Taking from Richard Middleton’s idea that we are receivers-processors-transmitters of music (Section 2.1), Ligeti’s ‘giant web’ metaphor of culture (Section 3.2) seems to be a natural extension of that idea, as well as being the most suitable model for me to consider my own musical tradition. The objective and all-embracing

nature of this metaphor helps me in dispelling my sense of inferiority for not coming from the ‘mainstream’ of Western classical music. Under this model, I can investigate all my sources of musical influence more openly and fairly, without the obligation of placing Western Classical musical tradition at the core. In doing so, I have come to accept the importance of non-Western Classical – Cantonese pop music, shidai qu, jazz, Western pop music etc. – in the making of my musical thinking. All these ‘alternative’ musical genres are the essential ingredients for a re-invented musical heritage, drawn from an imaginary country (similar to the strategy employed by Ligeti and Bouliane) unique to me. This framework of rules and codes becomes the source from which I can draw inspirations, ideas and materials for my compositions; as the six works included in the research has demonstrated.

From the experience of Chou Wen-chung and José Maceda, I came to realise the importance of universalism in tackling the problems faced by many Asian composers such as understanding their relationship with the ‘mainstream’ Western music, and finding a rightful place for their own ‘indigenous’ musical traditions. Through in-depth study of these two Asian composers’ ethos and works, I began to see the usefulness in distilling features and concepts common to both Western and Eastern music, and treating them as building materials for my own re-invented musical heritage. This procedure of syntactical abstraction helped me to find a way of counter-balancing the usual cultural emphasis on Western music in an informed fashion, treating different musical traditions on more equal standing. I developed a stronger sense of empowerment when confronting my non-Western Classical music background, rather than submitting to a feeling of inferiority. My enhanced sense of awareness and appreciation for the Chinese traditional music would not be possible if I had not established these connections.

An individual’s experiences and memories are essential to the imagining of one’s musical tradition. Chou and Maceda respective encounters with Varèse and Xenakis influenced their compositional development. Likewise, my acquaintance with Lukas Foss made a big impact on my musical thinking. Subsequently, his music and philosophy became an important of my perceived musical tradition. It is therefore important for us to realise that no two composers can have the same ‘imagined’ musical tradition; our individual experiences make them unique.

Discovering all these different areas concerning musical traditions are certainly important for me to progress as a composer who engages strongly with the notion of

tradition and heritage, as I set out to do at the beginning of the research. But in my view, one of the most important outcomes of this research is the sum of these parts: by encountering, exploring, practising and reflecting upon all the work that have been done in this research, I came to gain confidence as a composer during the course of this research, through a more systematic and analytical understanding of musical influences and their impact on me. I acquired a stronger sense of clarity in selecting influences for inclusion in my framework of imagined musical tradition. When I come to extract ideas form this repository, (i.e. my re-invented musical heritage), I now have a better sense of control over the degree of exposure of each tradition trail according to the need of each work. I feel I can make better and more informed choices on techniques and materials according to the circumstances of each new composition. As a result, I feel I can produce works which have a much stronger sense of unity, coherence, invention and most of all, assurance than ever before.

9. Glossary

Chou Wen-chung	周文中
Cui Jian	崔健
Erhu	二胡
Chu Ch'üan	朱權
Gansu	甘肅
Guzheng	古箏
Huangse Yinyue (or Yellow Music)	黃色音樂
I-Ching	易經
<i>Jieshi Diao Youlan</i>	碣石調幽蘭
Li Jinhui	黎錦輝
<i>Liaozhai Zhiyi</i> (or <i>Strange Tales From a Chinese Studio</i>)	聊齋誌異
Li Xiangting	李祥霆
<i>Maomao Yü</i>	毛毛雨
May Fourth Movement	五四運動
Pipa	琵琶
Pu Songling	蒲松齡
Qin (or Guqin)	古琴
<i>San Ts'ai T'u Hui</i>	三才圖會
Shaanxi	陝西
Shanxi	山西
<i>Shen Ch'i Pi P'u</i>	神奇秘譜
Shidai qu	時代曲
Tieti xia de genü	鐵蹄下的歌女
Wang Ch'i	王圻
Xibefeng	西北風
<i>Xintianyou</i>	信天游
Xungen	尋根
Yangqin	揚琴
<i>Yi Wu Suo You</i> (or <i>Nothing to My Name</i>)	一無所有
Zhou Long	周龍

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12. Discography

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13. Scores and CD

Submitted as part of this research are:

- Score of *Northwest Wind* (2010)
- Score of *Dead Letters* (2010)
- Score of *Jieshi* (2011)
- Score of *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* (2011)
- Score of *Les Etoiles au Front* (2012)
- Score of *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* (2012)
- 2 CDs containing recordings of:

Disc One:

1. *Northwest Wind* (11'13'')

Lontano, conducted by Odaline de la Martinez. South London Gallery, London. 25th March 2010.

2. *Dead Letters* (15'52'')

Nicholas Mulroy (tenor) and John Reid (piano). Tardebigge Church, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. 25th July 2010.

3. *Jieshi* (8'35'')

Li Xiangting and the English Chamber Orchestra Ensemble. British Museum, London. 27th May 2011.

4. *Oslo – Hommage à Lukas Foss* (9'43'')

Nouvel Enemble Moderne, conducted by Lorraine Vaillancourt. Salle François-Bernier, Le Domaine Forget, Canada. 15th August 2011.

5. *Les Etoiles au Front* (16'47'')

Stuart King (clarinet), Ian Watson (accordion) and members of the CHROMA Ensemble – Marcus Barcham-Stevens (violin), David Aspin (viola) and Clare O'Connell (cello). Kings Place, London. 20th February 2012.

Disc Two:

1. *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* (17'36'')

BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Long Yu. Barbican Hall, London. 18th January 2013.